



Philip Embury Preaching His First Sermon in the New World.

Drawn by B. West Clinebinst.

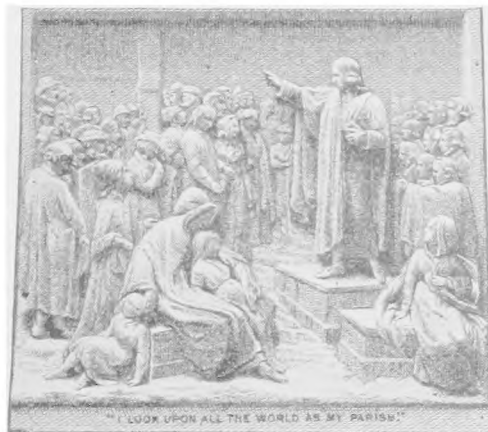
THE HISTORY OF METHODISM

BY

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AMERICAN
METHODISM



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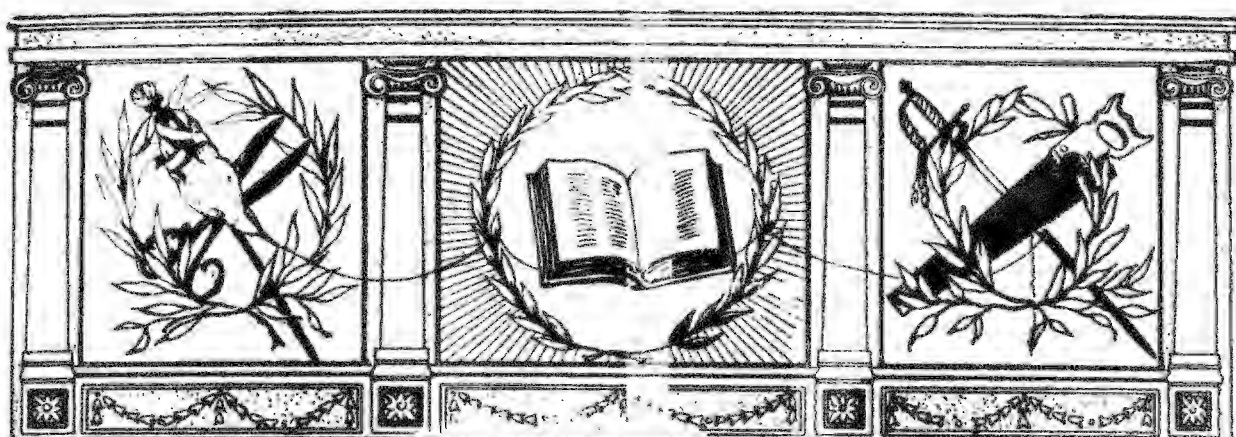
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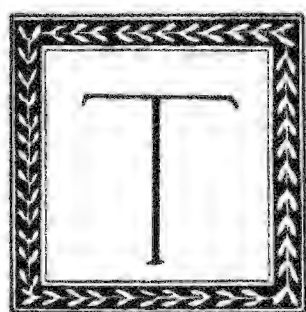


AMERICAN METHODISM

CHAPTER I

A Woman, a Carpenter, and a Redcoat

COSMOPOLITAN NEW YORK.—THE PREACHER OF THE FIRST SERMON.—
THE IRISH PALATINES IN NEW YORK.—CARDS IN MRS. HECK'S FIRE-
PLACE.—THE FIRST SERMON.—THE REDCOAT EVANGELIST.



THE beginnings of Methodism in America belong to the high realms of religious romance. New York was the first conspicuous scene. While the Dutch colonists were the first Europeans to possess and occupy Manhattan Island, other currents of immigrants from the Old World came and found a home in the enterprising and struggling village. It is safe to say that by the middle of the eighteenth century there was no important body of European Protestants which was not represented on that little island which is now the metropolis of the western hemisphere. The few Methodists there, however, were probably the most obscure. That any existed there at all was not suspected by the people in general. Churches there were, but they represented the more notable

confessions of the Old World, which were now taking firm root in the new. There were already two Reformed churches, which sustained the prestige of the earlier rule of the Dutch burghers. Then there were two edifices belonging to the Church of England—St. George's, at the corner of Cliff and Beekman Streets, and old Trinity, at the head of Wall Street, the predecessor of the stately church of to-day. The obscurer places of worship were the English and Scotch Presbyterian congregations, the little French Huguenot assembly, the Lutheran church, founded by the refugees from the Palatinate; the little knot of Moravians, the Baptist group, just getting into their first church; the Friends' meeting, and a synagogue of Spanish and Portuguese Jews. But where were the Methodists?

The first Methodist sermon in America of which we have anything like a definite account was preached in a private dwelling in the colonial city of New York, early in 1766, by Philip Embury, an emigrant carpenter, who had been stirred to do his duty by a zealous Palatine woman named Barbara Heck. The credit of protecting and promoting the success of this infant society belongs to an Englishman, Captain Thomas Webb, a warm-hearted Methodist soldier in the forces of His Britannic Majesty King George III.

Embury, the preacher, and a majority of his hearers were of German blood and Irish birth. Their fathers had been driven from the valley of the Rhine fifty years before, when the armies of France laid waste the Palatinate. Many of these German Lutherans had crossed the ocean and found homes in the British provinces of New York, the Jerseys, and Penn's Woods, but some families under the protection of the crown had turned aside to Ireland and settled in a cluster of villages not far from Limerick, where they kept

alive the language and customs of the Fatherland, but neglected their religion. Wesley and his helpers visited these unsavory communities, and their preaching was richly



DRAWN BY G. WILLARD BONTÉ.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

BALLINGRAN CHAPEL.

rewarded. Many Palatines were reclaimed, and whole villages became sober and godly Methodists.

Philip Embury was an inhabitant, probably a native, of Balligarrane, now Ballingran, one of these German villages in Ireland. He learned the carpenter's trade, and must have had a good bit of schooling from the old German village pedagogue, Guier, for, besides other convincing evidence of his intelligence and education, we have the precious writing, done by his own hand in his twenty-fifth year. It

was a Methodist itinerant that brought the light to Embury's soul, and as a class leader and local preacher the carpenter was soon diffusing the radiance among his neighbors.

The "rents" have been the bane of Ireland for more

*On Christmas Day;—
being Monday 4th 25th
of December, in the
Year 1752: the Lord shone in
to my soul by a glimpse
of his Redeeming love:
being an earnest of my
redemption in Christ
Jesus, to whom be glory
for ever & ever. Amen.*

Phil. Embury

EMBURY'S NOTE ON HIS CONVERSION.

than one century, and a tightening of the collector's thumbscrews at Balligarrane was always likely to send some young couples overseas to the New World, where many a thrifty family of Palatines of earlier emigrations was already on the road to wealth. It was probably this cause that brought Philip Embury and

his fresh young bride, Margaret (Switzer), with several families of their kinsfolk and acquaintance on board a ship in the Shannon bound for America, where the party intended to devote themselves to the cultivation of flax and the manufacture of linen and hemp. Besides the Emburys,

the names of their shipmates, Paul Heck of Balligarrane, and his wife Barbara Ruckle, will always have an interest in Methodist eyes. Two months later the ship *Perry*, Captain Hogan, from Limerick, entered the Narrows, passed up the beautiful bay, and on August 11, 1760, landed its passengers on Manhattan Island, in the British province of New York.

The city, which doubtless impressed the villagers from County Limerick with its size and splendor, was but a hamlet in comparison with the Greater New York which now makes populous the shores of bay and rivers. Manhattan Island had, perhaps, fourteen thousand inhabitants, at least one half of them of Dutch descent. Many shops still displayed Dutch signs, and the older-fashioned burghers cherished the old language. The city was mainly built on the lower end of the island, for the most part south of the Commons (now City Hall Park), though tending to spread out northward along the Bowery, which was the high road to Boston.

It was fashionable to attend worship on Sunday either at one of the English churches with the governor and military, or at the Dutch churches, where the Knickerbocker aristocracy outslept the tedious sermon. But the struggling band of Baptists and the devoted Moravians could testify to the poverty of spiritual religion in this gay commercial capital.

For a few years after the arrival of the Irish Palatines we hear little of them beyond their unsuccessful attempts to obtain a tract of land on which to establish their industrial colony. Philip Embury, who had labored successfully as a local preacher in his own country, and had even been a candidate for the itinerancy in 1758, remained silent for some years after his arrival in New York. He worked faithfully at his trade, living in a small house then far

uptown (near the present entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge), and cast in his lot with the Lutherans, among whom were doubtless old friends and kindred from the Rhine lands. The advertisement of "Philip Embury, Schoolmaster," in Weyman's New York Gazette in March and April, 1761, would indicate that the carpenter was not entirely dependent upon the work of his hands for support.

Successive immigrations brought more Methodist men and women from the old Limerick villages, who backslid among the temptations of the city and indulged in open sin.

Phil. Embury, School-Master,

GIVES Notice, that on the first Day of May next, he intends to teach Reading, Writing, and Arithmetick, in English, in the New School-House, now building in Little Queen-street, next Door to the Lutheran Ministers: And as he has been inform'd, that several Gentlemen were willing to favour him with their Children, he gives farther Notice, that if a sufficient Number of Scholars should attend his School, he would teach in Company with Mr. John Embury, (who teaches several Branches belonging to Trade and Business) that Children might be carefully attended, as he faithfully desires the Good of the Publick. He now teaches at Mr. Samuel Foster's, in Carman's-street.

FACSIMILE OF THE ADVERTISEMENT OF PHILIP EMBURY, NEW YORK, 1761.

The retiring German carpenter might endure such sights; not so his energetic kinswoman, Mrs. Barbara Heck. One evening, early

in the year 1766, she burst in upon a card-playing company of her countrymen in her own kitchen, swept the pack from the table into her apron, whence she shook the cards into the open fire, rebuking the gamesters in hot and righteous wrath. Thence, her mind made up, she went straight to the silent Embury, and told him what she had done and what he ought to do. "Philip," she pleaded, "you must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell, and God will require our blood at your hands." She crushed his timid objections of "no preaching place and no congregation" with a woman's prompt good sense: "Preach here in your own house, and to your own company." She herself went forth

Barbara Heck Exhorting Philip Embury to Preach the Gospel.

Drawn by Dan Beard.



and persuaded her husband to come. Mrs. Embury was there, of course; Mr John Lawrence, a friend, and Betty, an African servant, were usually numbered in the congregation of five who sat in the carpenter's living room that evening to hear the Scripture and exhortation and unite in the earnest prayer and in the singing of the sweet Wesley hymns.

There were doubtless among the cosmopolitan people of New York not a few English and Irish immigrants who had been reached by the Wesleyan evangelists in the old country. There were certainly

DRAWN BY DAN BEARD**EMBURY'S CALL TO PREACH.**

among the troops in the British garrison men whom the sound of song or preaching drew into Embury's cottage on Barrack Street. The handful was soon more than a houseful, and a room for the preaching was hired in the same

street a few doors from the infantry barracks. Here three Methodist musicians from the military band of the Sixteenth Foot came to the aid of Mr. Embury with their exhortations. A number were converted and a "class" of twelve members was gathered. Following the earliest Methodist examples of preaching the Gospel to the poor, Mr. Embury visited the poorhouse, and souls were awakened and converted even in that hopeless place. The work was still very much circumscribed, and growing slowly by conversions and accessions from the mother country, when a new figure came upon the scene, bringing with him qualities which were lacking in the timid and unaggressive carpenter of Balligarrane. The newcomer was Thomas Webb, barrack master of the king's troops at Albany.

It was at one of its evening meetings, some months after that famous card party which a woman's touch transformed into a revival, that the Methodist congregation was surprised, somewhat startled, perhaps, by the entrance of a British officer. It was not too rare an occurrence in those days for persons of quality to mock at the humble Methodists, and the sight of a scarlet coat and gold lace was calculated to disturb a worshiping assemblage. But it soon became known that this man, though he held the king's commission, was a fervent Methodist.

Thomas Webb, though young in the Gospel service, was a veteran of the French and Indian wars. A green patch concealed the loss of the right eye, which had been put out by a French ball at Louisbourg, and scars in his arm bore witness to his heroism at Quebec under General Wolfe. He was a half-pay lieutenant on the retired list, and in his forty-first year (1764), when the hot shot of John Wesley's preaching at Bristol penetrated his heart and kindled a flame



DRAWN BY B. WEST CLINEDINST.

THE FIRST METHODIST MEETING IN NEW YORK.

of Christian devotion which was thenceforward the center of all his thoughts and actions. From a fervent exhorter he soon became an attractive and effective local preacher. His



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

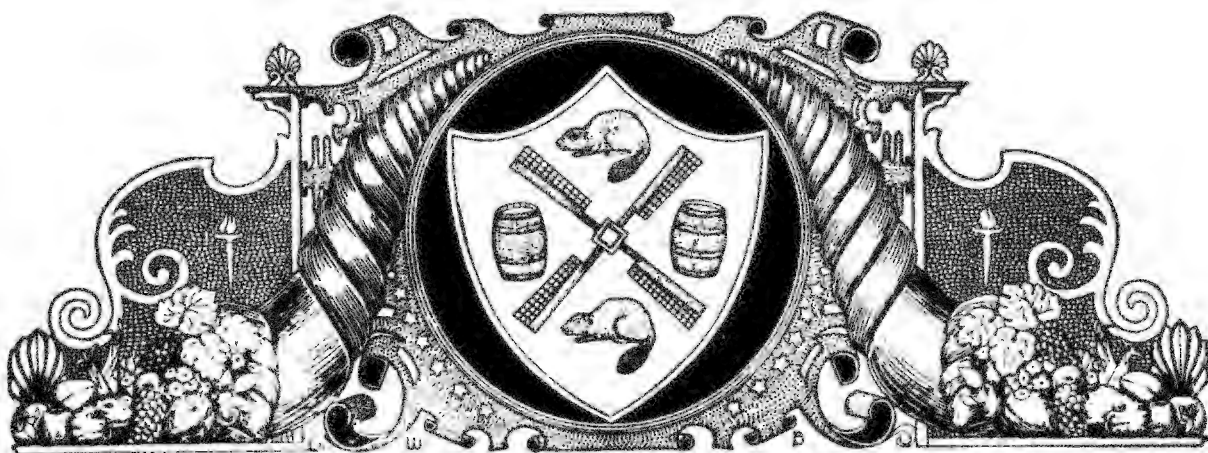
BARBARA HECK'S BIBLE,

Now in the possession of Victoria University, Toronto, Canada.

return to America did not cool his zeal, and we may imagine the delight with which he received the news at Albany, doubtless from some news-mongering quartermaster, that a Metho-

dist society had been formed on Manhattan Island. He was not long in finding an opportunity to take sloop down the river to see and hear and help, as best he could, the cause which lay so near his honest heart.

Embury welcomed the stranger and invited him to preach. The news that a redcoat captain—for “Captain Webb” he will always be, whatever the roster may rank him—was preaching to the Methodists was enough to stir the sluggish curiosity of a Dutchman, and the audience room was taxed to hold the throng who came. He preached in full regimentals, with his sword on the table beside him. We may believe that their curiosity was well repaid, for we know that Wesley highly esteemed Webb’s fiery eloquence, while witnesses as diverse as John Adams, President of the United States, and Peter Williams, the colored sexton of John Street Church, were equally convinced of his ability and power as an orator.



CHAPTER II

"Let Us Arise and Build!"

THE OLD RIGGING LOFT.—AN HISTORIC SUBSCRIPTION PAPER.—OLD JOHN STREET.—"WESLEY CHAPEL."—THE BEST DEDICATION OF A PULPIT.—THE CARPENTER AND THE WOMAN.—THE REDCOAT IN PHILADELPHIA.

THE accession of numbers which followed upon Captain Webb's timely arrival among the New York Methodists necessitated a new and larger preaching place. One of those spacious rigging lofts which, in the scarcity of public halls at that time, were frequently utilized for religious, political, and social assemblages was rented. This apartment—the historic Old Rigging Loft—was in a building on Horse and Cart Street (now William), between John and Fair (now Fulton). The Baptists had already held services there. It afterward reverted to its original use as a sail-maker's loft. The building, which was latterly numbered 120 William Street, was standing until 1854.

The two preachers, one in hodden the other in the king's scarlet, labored earnestly and were encouraged by substantial results. Two sermons on the Sabbath, at daybreak and at candlelight—for the Methodist society was to supplement, not to replace, the service of the Church of England—and one on Thursday evening drew so many hearers to the bare 18x60-foot

room that again the accommodation proved insufficient. Within a year the society began to talk about building and owning a preaching place. Some advised against so ambitious



DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS

FROM A WOOD CUT

THE OLD RIGGING LOFT.

Where Captain Webb and Embury preached.

an undertaking, but the same woman who had recalled Embury to his duty was not lacking now. Barbara Heck had said that it was the Lord's work, and she brought the others to her way of thinking. It was determined to arise and build.

A plot of ground was secured in 1768, by lease, and two years later by deed, in the "North Ward" of the city, on the lower side of John Street. The subscription paper to the

Preamble of the Subscription List with the Names of the Subscribers
And Respective sums given Annexed

A Number of persons desirous to worship God in spirit and in truth.
Commonly call'd Methodists. (under the direction of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley)
Whom it is evident God has often been pleased to Bless in their Ministry
in New York. Thinking it wou'd be more for the Glory of God, and the
good of Souls, had they a more convenient place to meet in, where the
Gospel of Jesus Christ might be preach'd without distraction of Mind
or party. And as Mr. Philip Embury is desirous and helps in the
Gospel, they humbly beg the assistance of Christian Friends in Order
to enable them to build a Small house for that purpose. Not doubting
But the God of all Generations will abundantly Bless all such as
are willing to Contribute to the same.

<i>Names</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Sum</i>
Thomas Davis	30	Brought Over	10A 5
William Lupton	20	Grace Bond	3 5
James Jarrett	10	John Cook	3 0
Charles Allen	5	Paul Smith	3 5
Benjamin Hopt	5	Joseph Pearson	3 2
Christopher Stennett	5	John Cunningham	2 10
J. Roberts	1	Mr. Graham	1 10
Oliver Delaney	6 10	James Emery	4 10
John Cooper	5	Henry Foster	3 5
R. M. Bishop	3 5	Nick Jones	3 5
James Delaney	3 5	1 5	8
Robt. Lake	5	Harry Rether	0
Rev. Mr. Whitely	2	Rev. Mr. Pugh	10 5
Rev. Mr. Rogers	1 12 6	Mr. Jones	0
Rev. Mr. English	1 12 6	John Bell House	1
	10A 5	Brought Forward	130 11 3

ORIGINAL SUBSCRIBERS TO THE BUILDING FUND OF
JOHN STREET CHAPEL.

The first page of the list. Reproduced from the copy in the "Old Book" of Record of
the John Street Society.

building fund has been carefully preserved. Two hundred and fifty-nine subscriptions follow this excellent preamble: "A number of persons desirous to worship God in spirit and in truth, Commonly called Methodists (Under the direction of the Revd. Mr. John Wesley), whom it is Evident God has often been pleased to Bless in their Meetings in New York, Thinking it wo'd be more for the Glory of God and the good of souls, had they a more Convenient place to meet in, where the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be preached without distinction of Sects or partys, And as Mr Philip Embury is a member and helper in the Gospel, they Humbly beg the assistance of Christian friends, in Order to Enable them to Build a Small house for that purpose, Not doubting But the God of all Consolation will Abundantly Bless all such as are willing to Contribute to the Same."

"Thomas Webb, £30," heads the paper—and closes it, too, for that matter, for the last entry is, "Thomas Webb, £3 4s. 0d., given in interest upon his bond." William Lupton, sometime quartermaster under Captain Webb, and now a Methodist and a merchant of substance, comes next with £20, and later with £10 more. James Jarvis, the Methodist hatter, put down £20 in two subscriptions. There were few of these munificent givers. Three fourths of the subscribers gave £1 or less. The friends of the new enterprise did not limit their appeal to their own people. Dr. Auchmuty, the rector of Trinity, and his assistants, Mr. Ogilvie and Mr. Ingles (the loyalist priest who insisted on praying for George III on the occasion of General Washington's attendance at his church in 1776), gave, as they certainly should, for the new building was only a preaching place for a religious society—not a rival church. Many of the leading citizens appear in this excellent company: John Cruger, nine years

mayor; Philip Livingston, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence; John Watts, the royal recorder whose statue is in Trinity Churchyard; Professor Middleton, of King's College; James Duane, eminent in law and politics; and the names of Beekman, DePeyster, Delancy, Rhineland, Van Schaick, Lispenard, Goelet, Hamersley, and Schuyler are mingled with those of the plainer Methodist folk, Heck, Hick, Embury, Sause, Crook, Taylor, Johnston, Cook, Newton, Chave, Sands, and Staples. More than thirty of the subscribers are women. Mary Barclay, the widow of Trinity's second rector, is there with her £2, and so on down to the few shillings of "Rachel" and "Margaret," who were probably colored servants, giving from their scant earnings. The entire subscription yielded £418 3s. 6d. Wesley sent money and books, and Webb collected £32 in Philadelphia, where spiritual seed of his sowing had already come to fruitage.

Work on the building was pushed with energy, and the subscribers soon had the satisfaction of seeing results. On the south side of John Street, separated from the sidewalk by a brick-paved area some thirty feet square, rose a plain structure of ballast stone, veneered with light-blue plaster. The gable fronted the street, and as there was a chimney, but no spire, the edifice made no pretensions to ecclesiastical architecture. It was 42x60 feet, and the interior was thrown into one barnlike room, probably without galleries at first, though these were soon added, the women occupying the one on the right, and the men that on the left. The pulpit, which the carpenter-preacher is said to have made with his own hands, stood opposite the entrance, and was so high that so sedate a preacher as Nathan Bangs said it always made him dizzy to speak from it. The benches were of deal, white with scrubbing, but unpainted. A fireplace took the chill off

the air in winter, and there was such ventilation as the windows might furnish. The dim light of tallow candles sufficed for the evening service, and sooner or later a clock faced the preacher from the gallery front. The timepiece, which is inscribed, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh," is still preserved "alive" in the present John Street Church.

The first sermon in the new "Wesley Chapel," as the preaching place was called, was preached on October 30, 1768,



FROM A LITHOGRAPH.

"WESLEY CHAPEL." THE FIRST "JOHN STREET CHURCH."

The building on the right was used as the preachers' house after 1770.

by Mr. Embury, who had been employed as a carpenter upon its erection. His text was from Hosea x, 12: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reape after the measure of mercie; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seeke the Lord, till he come and raine righteousness upon you," to follow the quaint style of the "Geneva" or "Breeches" Bible, from which he probably read. We know nothing more concerning the service, but it has been said that Mr. Embury declared

“the best dedication of a pulpit was to preach a good sermon in it.” Certainly, with such a text and such an occasion, with the history of the Lord’s doings within the past two years still fresh in his mind, with a throng of seven hundred earnest auditors before him, and with the eye of good Barbara Heck full upon him, we may be sure that the usually quiet preacher was fervid in his exhortation, and the tears which were so near his eyes streamed down his weather-beaten cheeks as he declared, “It is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”

For more than a year Embury and Webb continued to preach several times a week in the new chapel, occupying faithfully until Wesley should send out the eagerly awaited missionaries—so faithfully, indeed, that the Dutch dominie preached against their doctrine. The first of the English preachers, Mr. Williams, reached New York in September, 1769, and Embury then felt free to follow his inclinations and his judgment and retire from the city, which was already becoming a hotbed of feeling against the royal government. In January, 1770, the first blood of the Revolution was spilled in the “Battle of Golden Hill,” a collision between the Red-coats and the Sons of Liberty close by the little chapel. We do not know that this hastened the preacher’s decision, but we do know that the fall of this year found him settled upon a farm in Salem, Albany County, N. Y., with the Hecks and other Palatine families whom he had long known. This migration was not an isolated case; for the angry political sky was driving into the interior many settlers of British birth and sympathies, together with not a few old colonial families who preferred peace to the dangers which threatened the seaboard.

The John Street people did not allow their first preacher

to go away empty-handed. An entry in the old account book of the society, dated April 10, 1770, reads: "To cash paid Philip Embury to buy a concordance, £2 5s. 0d."—which identical volume, the third edition of Cruden (London, 1769), bearing the inscription, "Phil. Embury, April, 1770," may still be seen in the library of the Wesleyan Theological College at Montreal. Nor did he need Mrs. Heck to keep him alive to his duty in his new surroundings. The farm work and carpentry, which yielded him his livelihood, did not make him forget his call to preach. He organized classes on the Wesleyan plan, and was instrumental in gathering the Ashgrove society, of which his friend and neighbor,



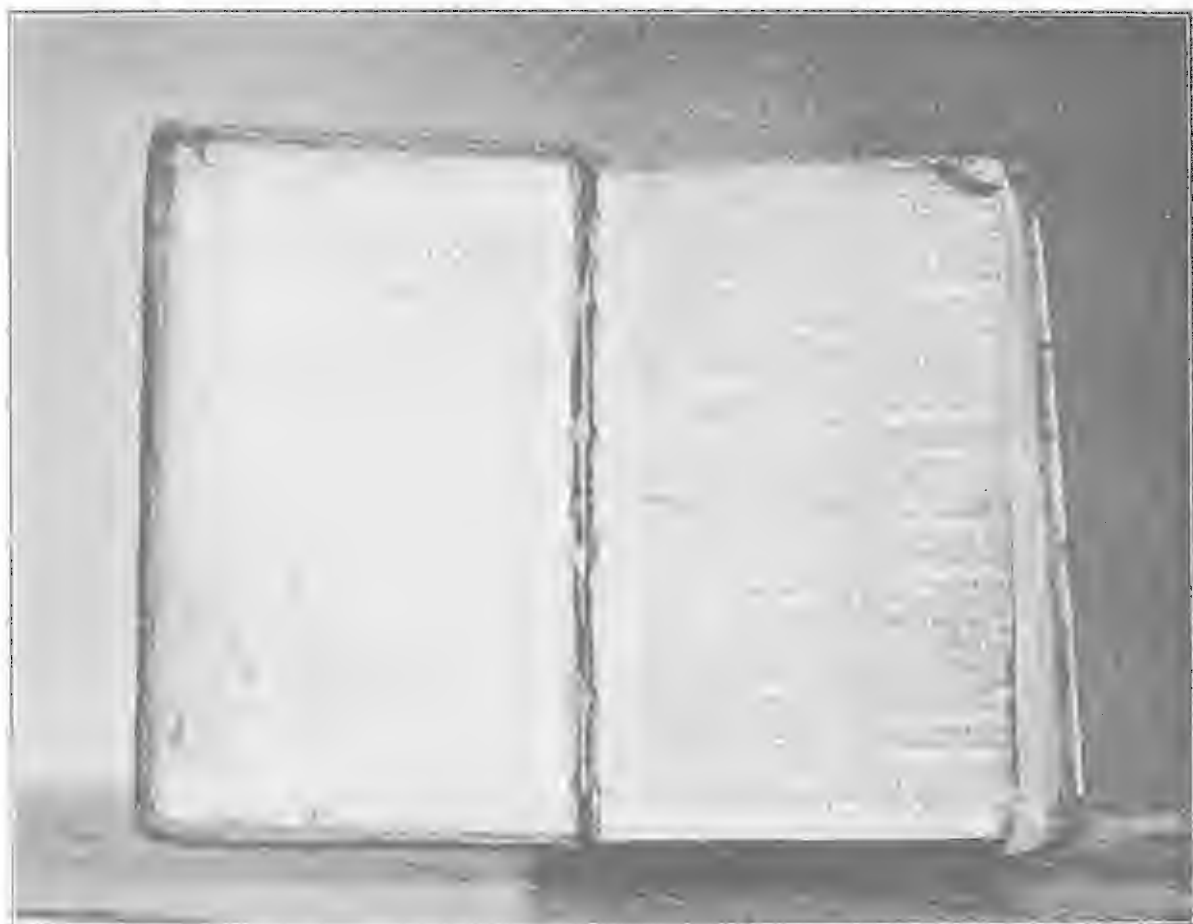
PHILIP EMBURY'S CONCORDANCE.

Presented to him by the Methodists of New York on his removal in April, 1770. Preserved in the library of the Wesleyan Theological College, Montreal.

Thomas Ashton, a Methodist from Ireland, was the chief support. This society, the first one founded in America north of New York city, was the pioneer appointment of what is now the Troy Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Embury did not live to see the outbreak of the war. After his death, in 1773, his widow, with the Hecks and some other neighbors, removed to Canada, where Barbara Heck died in 1804, at the ripe age of seventy. Since her conversion, at the age of eighteen, she had lived as in the presence of her Saviour. The manner of her death was beautiful. She had

been sitting alone one August day in the orchard behind her son's great stone house by the majestic St. Lawrence River. Her eyes were on her husband's old German Bible which lay in her lap, but her thoughts were far away. Her little grandson found her sitting thus, but her soul had passed to Him who gave it. This woman, who did so much for American Methodism, lies buried in the old Blue Church burying ground



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

PAUL HECK'S GERMAN BIBLE.

Now in the possession of Victoria University, Toronto.

near Prescott, Ontario. In the same graveyard sleeps Margaret, the widow of Embury, whose second husband was John Lawrence, one of the original Methodists of New York.

Captain Webb might be on the retired list of His Britannic Majesty, but his Christian warfare knew no furlough. Such facts as we gather from casual notices in letters and local

histories only serve to show his zeal in the cause. "T T," the Methodist who described the work to Wesley in a long letter, dated New York, April 11, 1768, spoke of the captain as the providential means of attracting popular attention to the modest services which Embury had been conducting in a little circle of his fellow-countrymen. The news that a one-eyed Methodist soldier would preach in full regimentals had filled the sail loft and encouraged the faithful to build a preaching house of their own.

The captain's parish was as wide as Wesley's. He preached wherever he could get a hearing. "T T" tells us that his fiery appeals to the people of Long Island, where his wife had kin, had resulted in twenty-four conversions before 1768. Blessed with some property and his pay, the captain was not so poverty-bound as his brother preacher, who had enough to do to support his family, with the help of a few shillings now and then from the Methodist society to enable him to make a decent appearance in the pulpit. Travel, an expensive indulgence in the eighteenth century, was not for the industrious carpenter. Webb's time was his own, and in the saddle or by the jolting stage he traversed the Jerseys to Philadelphia certainly as early as 1769, perhaps earlier, preaching at Burlington the first Methodist sermon in west Jersey. His sermons, too, were the earliest from Methodist lips in the Quaker city, where he gathered the awakened into a class of seven members about 1768 in the sail loft of Samuel Croft, near the Delaware River, at the corner of Front and Croft Streets. Fitzgerald, Pennington, Emerson, and Hood were the families represented in that first class, of which Emerson was the leader. Hood, the second leader, lived until 1829, and was then reputed the oldest living Methodist in the New World.

The captain also collected in Philadelphia the goodly sum of £32 toward the New York chapel fund, for which he was making every sacrifice. A year or two later, after the arrival of the Wesleyan missionaries, when the Philadelphia society had purchased at a bargain the unfinished church edifice of a bankrupt German congregation, afterward famous as



FROM AN ENGRAVING IN THE LADIES' REPOSITORY, 1866.

THE BURIAL PLACE OF THE HECKS.

In the "Old Blue" Churchyard, near Prescott, Ontario.

St. George's "the Methodist Cathedral," Webb freely gave his share of the purchase money, and his name appears on the original list of trustees.

Captain Webb, while working mightily in New York city, had found time to "fell a few trees on Long Island," as he described his effective sermons at Jamaica and elsewhere. From Philadelphia, likewise, he made excursions into the surrounding country, pressing his message upon all who would hear. About 1769 we have glimpses of him at several points in south Jersey, southwestern Pennsylvania, and

northern Delaware. Pilmoor, the Wesleyan missionary, writing of the work which had opened in Maryland, couples the name of this zealous Christian soldier with that of Robert Strawbridge, another Irish carpenter who had been proclaiming in the forest clearings of the South the same full and free Gospel which Philip Embury was preaching in the northern city

A facsimile of a handwritten signature and date. The signature 'Phil Embury' is written in a large, elegant cursive script. Below it, the date 'April, 1770 -' is written in a similar but slightly smaller cursive script. The entire text is contained within a rectangular border.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

FACSIMILE OF THE SIGNATURE IN EMBURY'S CONCORDANCE.



CHAPTER III

Strawbridge, the Maryland Farmer-Preacher

AN OPEN QUESTION.—ROBERT STRAWBRIDGE IN IRELAND.—BEGINNINGS IN MARYLAND.—THE LOG CHAPEL.—CAPTAIN WEBB'S DISCOVERY.—INDEPENDENCE.—"THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM."

BEFORE the Revolution, when the irregularity of the mails and the difficulty of travel restricted communication and kept the newspapers from getting even such news as was of general interest, an event of such apparent insignificance as the holding of religious meetings by a simple farmer in a backwoods settlement could gain little publicity. We have no knowledge that the little company of Methodists in New York city were aware of the presence of any of their fellow-religionists in the South until 1768, at the earliest. It was probably Captain Webb, while on one of his sallies southward from Philadelphia, who first brought to light the good work of Robert Strawbridge in Maryland. The virulence of the old contest for priority between New York and Maryland Methodism has spent itself. The two are entitled to equal merit. The dates of the development in New York are established by documentary evidence, but the testimony on the southern side makes a strong case, and is thoroughly consistent with the theory of Strawbridge's simultaneous movement.

The southern pioneer was, like Embury, from the Emerald Isle, but not of German ancestry. The Strawbridges were farmers from County Leitrim, and Robert was born at Drummersnave (now Drumsna), a village of a single street near the



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE VILLAGE STREET OF DRUMSNA.

Where Robert Strawbridge was born.

lovely Shannon. Wesley, who visited the locality in 1758, found the region a paradise of nature, though the people treated him vilely.

The dates of Strawbridge's life are very uncertain. He is said to have been converted in his native village and joined the Methodists. Driven out by persecution because of his proselyting among his Catholic neighbors, he took refuge in Sligo and Cavan, where he exercised his gifts as a preacher. At Terryhugan he married Miss Piper, a Wesleyan lady, and soon after, "probably in 1766," says Crook, the chief Irish authority upon his movements, emigrated to America.

Robert Strawbridge was of medium height, with dark hair

and skin. His voice was unusually melodious and his singing was a delight to hear. To his rich spiritual experience of the truths which he had doubtless heard from Wesley's own lips he added the warm heart and natural eloquence of



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

REPUTED BIRTHPLACE OF ROBERT STRAWBRIDGE, DRUMSNA.

his countrymen. He had the Celtic restlessness withal, and came over with his young wife to improve his fortunes in the new country

Strawbridge's occupation in the old country had been that of Embury—a carpenter. But he changed his calling and his sky together. He arrived in Maryland at a time when the end of long Indian troubles had opened to settlement the upper part of the province, and in the region of Sam's Creek, in the great County of Frederick, the young Irish

carpenter settled as a pioneer farmer. We do not know the date of his first sermon, though some, who set an early date for his arrival, would place it as early as 1762. He was not cast in the mold of the retiring and self-distrusting

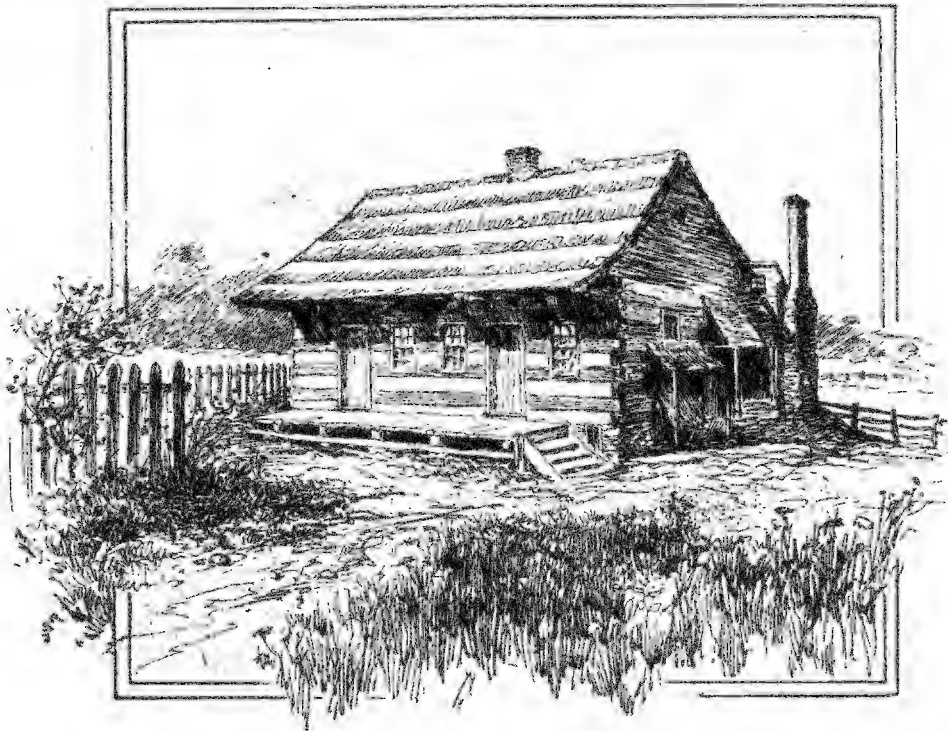


METHODIST MARYLAND.

Showing the locality of the early labors of Robert Strawbridge.

Embury, and probably began preaching as soon as he could get a few of his neighbors together. Moreover, there were no churches or clergymen in that up-country wilderness, and this zealous layman did not hesitate to administer baptism to believers and their children. The meetings in the settlers'

cabins grew in interest. A Methodist society was formed, with John Evans, Andrew Poulson, Benjamin Marcarel, and John England among the earliest members. Together they built a preachinghouse of hewn logs near Sam's Creek, on John England's farm, on which also and one-fourth of a mile



DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS.

FROM A LITHOGRAPH.

THE OLD JOHN EVANS HOUSE.

From the Centennial Album, 1866.

west of the church stood the cabin of the preacher, while England's house was between the two. The first chapel of the Maryland Methodists was twenty feet square. There was no need of any subscription to the building fund of this primitive meetinghouse. A site could be had for the asking. Willing hands felled the trees, squared the logs, and raised the roof. No door was hung, and the window openings were left unglazed. When Asbury preached there in the winter of 1772 he pitied his hearers, shivering on their unbacked benches, and had to tie his handkerchief over his head to save his own ears from frost.

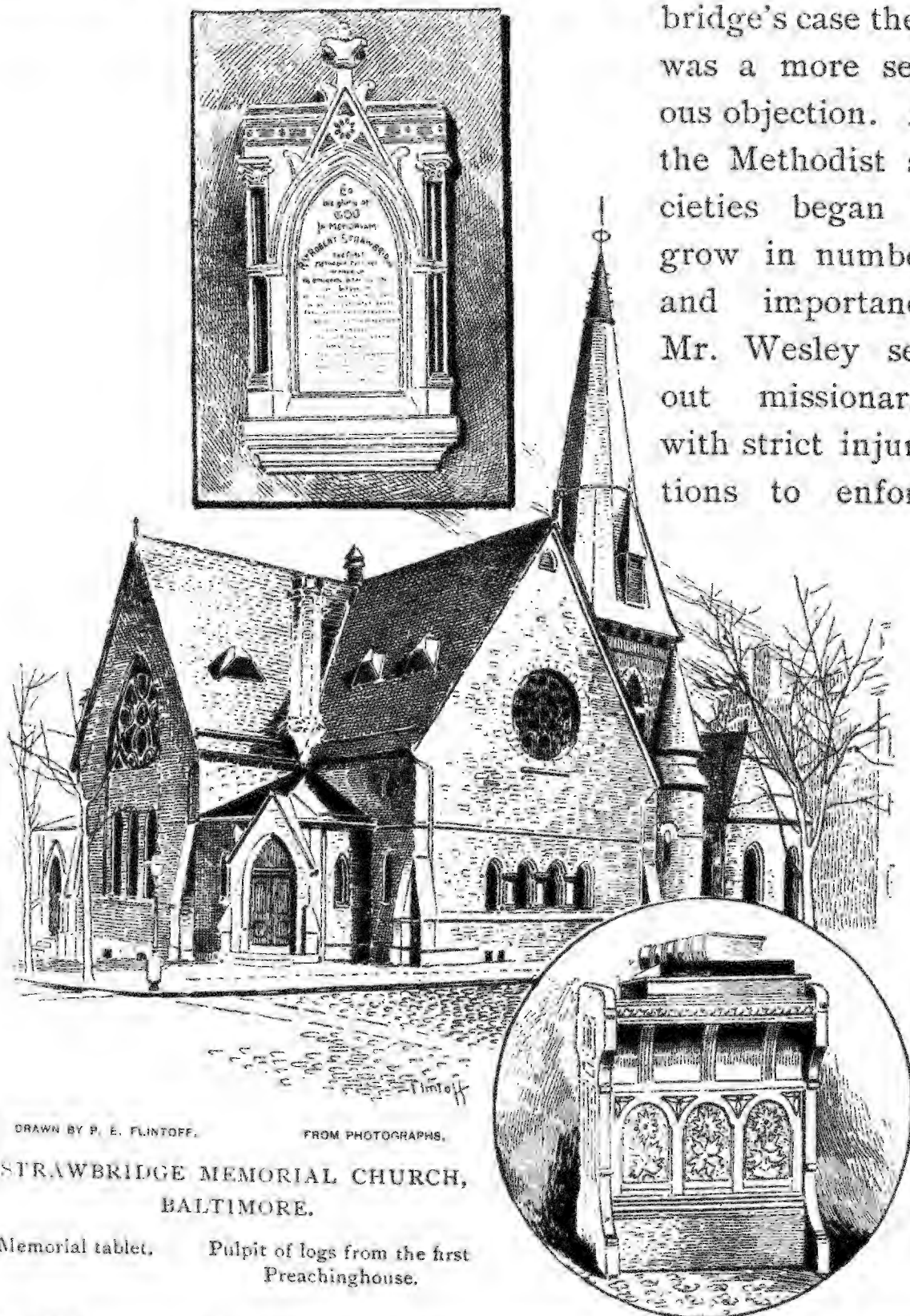
The building of the famous log chapel did not anchor this restless evangelist. The needs of the new settlements, left unvisited by the lethargic clergy of the Established Church, were a call to which Strawbridge's glowing heart responded eagerly. When his work on the farm would permit—and often when it would not—he went on longer or shorter preaching excursions through northwestern Maryland and parts of the adjacent provinces, though few traces of his movements still survive. We know that to the British Wesleyan Conference at Bristol in 1768 there came entreaties for help, not only from New York, but from “a few people in Maryland, who had lately been awakened under the preaching of Robert Strawbridge.” Captain Webb probably came to his aid for a while in the fall of 1769, and on Sunday, January 14, 1770, the backwoods preacher emerges into documentary history, being on record as giving “a plain, practical sermon at seven in the morning” in St. George's Chapel, Philadelphia.

Strawbridge had qualities of heart which grappled his friends to him with hooks of steel. They cared for his family during his protracted absences from home, and his later years were spent on a property at Long Green, Baltimore County, which a friendly patron, Captain Charles Ridgely, granted to him free of rent. He had that rare quality, also, of stirring up his converts to exercise their gifts. Many of the first race of preachers received their impulse from his earnest words. Among these was Richard Owen, whose claim to be the first native American Methodist preacher so long went unchallenged.

In the printed Minutes of the first Conference of the American preachers (1773) Robert Strawbridge's name is included in the list of itinerants. It appears but once more, in 1775, and disappears without comment. The possession of a wife and

children was enough to disqualify most men for the arduous labors of a traveling preacher at that time. But in Straw-

bridge's case there was a more serious objection. As the Methodist societies began to grow in numbers and importance, Mr. Wesley sent out missionaries with strict injunctions to enforce



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

FROM PHOTOGRAPHS.

STRAWBRIDGE MEMORIAL CHURCH,
BALTIMORE.

Memorial tablet,

Pulpit of logs from the first
Preachinghouse.

the Wesleyan discipline among preachers and people. Wesley still clung to the theory that Methodism was not a Church,

but a society of earnest believers, within the pale of the Church of England. Accordingly his helpers in England and America were merely lay preachers, and members of the society were urged to look to the rector of the parish for the sacraments. Strawbridge, long accustomed to choose his own fields of labor and to govern his own ministerial conduct, fretted under the new discipline. He asserted



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

HOUSE WHERE STRAWBRIDGE DIED, AND HIS FUNERAL.

From the drawing in the Centennial Album, 1866

his perfect fitness to administer the sacraments, greatly to the dissatisfaction of the strict young Asbury, who was ten years longer in reaching the same conclusion. In 1778, when the Conference rule was stiffened further, Asbury endeavored to have Strawbridge yield. But he was "inflexible," and the man of iron discipline records of him that "he would not administer the ordinances under our direction at all."

Though not on the itinerant roll, Mr. Strawbridge was neither silent nor idle. He continued to preach as opportunity offered until his death. He died in 1781 or 1782, and was

buried in an apple orchard overlooking Baltimore. When the news of his decease reached Asbury he grimly affirmed that the Lord had removed him "because he was in a way to do hurt to his cause," though he was willing to believe that God had "saved him in mercy" at last, so hard was it in



DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS.

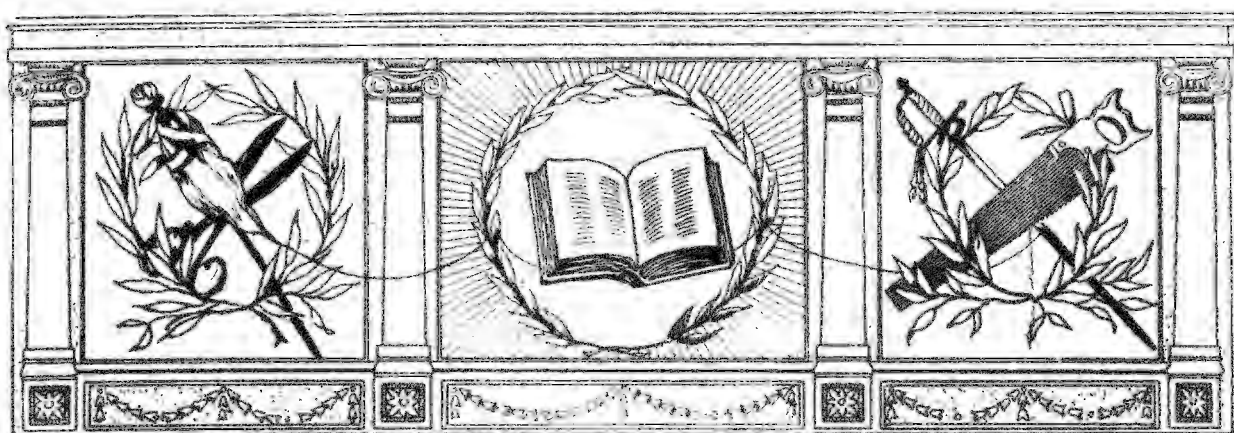
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

STRAWBRIDGE'S MONUMENT.

In Mount Olivet Cemetery, Baltimore.

1781 to look without prejudice upon an unordained preacher, who dared baptize and give the bread and wine to the children whom his voice had led to repentance! But those who had been with the high-spirited Irishman through good and evil report, who had witnessed his self-denying zeal for his Master's cause, and had heard his mellow voice raised in song and prayer and persuasive pleading with the sinner, would let no ecclesiastical quibble shake their loyalty to their friend, or cause them to doubt his fidelity to the cause. Richard Owen preached the funeral sermon from the words:

"AND I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAYING UNTO ME, WRITE, BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD FROM HENCEFORTH: YEA, SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABORS; AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM."



CHAPTER IV

Helpers from Abroad

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.—LETTERS FROM AMERICA.—“T. T.” AND THOMAS BELL.—“WE WOULD SELL OUR COATS AND SHIRTS.”—THE VOLUNTEERS, BOARDMAN AND PILMOOR.—ROBERT WILLIAMS FIRST OF ALL.

IT was most natural that the Methodist societies in America should acknowledge their relationship to the great Wesleyan body in the mother country and apply to it for material aid. The three earliest preachers in America—Strawbridge, Webb, and Embury—and many of the early members were emigrants who had belonged to Wesley's societies abroad.

The anti-English feeling in the colonies was not yet strong enough to prevent such a renewal of old ties, and Wesley himself, who had already taken the world for his parish, had confessed to yearnings for the welfare of the unshepherded flocks beyond the Atlantic. The societies, moreover, needed help which America could not then afford. Friendly citizens, and even the Anglican clergy, might assist in building Methodist preachinghouses, but there was a pitiful lack of men who could preach from the treasure of their own assured salvation the gospel of a universal hope and a life of holiness. They needed help from that band of ardent evangelists which

Wesley had been mustering and drilling in the three kingdoms for a generation. Nor were they slow to present their claims.

In a letter dated "New York, April 11, 1768," an Englishman wrote to Wesley over the signature "T T" an account of the state of religion in that city, especially narrating the beginnings of the Methodist society there, which was just breaking ground for its first edifice in John Street. After adroitly explaining how he has dissuaded the brethren from appealing to Wesley for a collection, he says: "Yet so far would I earnestly beg, if you would intimate our circumstances to particular persons of ability, perhaps God would open their hearts to assist this infant society, and contribute to the first preachinghouse on the original Methodist plan in all America (excepting Mr. Whitefield's Orphan House in Georgia); but I shall write no more on this subject."

"There is another point," continued "T T.," "far more material, and in which I must importune your assistance not only in my own name, but also in the name of the whole society. We want an able and experienced preacher; one who has both grace and gifts necessary to the work. God has not indeed despised the day of small things. There is a real work of grace begun in many hearts by the preaching of Mr. Webb and Mr. Embury, but, although they are both useful, and their hearts in the work, they want many qualifications for such an undertaking; and the progress of the Gospel here depends much on the qualifications of preachers." The ideal preacher he must have is "a man of wisdom, of sound faith, and a good disciplinarian: one whose heart and soul are in the work; and I doubt not but by the goodness of God such a flame would soon be kindled as would never stop until it reached the great South Sea. We may make many shifts to

avoid temporal inconveniences, but we cannot purchase such a preacher as I have described. Dear sir, I entreat you, for the good of thousands, to use your utmost endeavors to send one over. With respect to money for the payment of the preachers' passage over, if they could not procure it, we would sell our coats and shirts to procure it for them. I most earnestly beg an interest in your prayers, and trust you and many of our brethren will not forget the church in this wilderness.”

This is doubtless the same letter from America which Wesley this year allowed one of his preachers “ to read publicly, and to receive whatever the hearers were willing to give.” The substance of it was also laid before the Conference.

About the same time a Methodist mechanic named Thomas Bell, who had labored in the erection of Wesley Chapel in New York, wrote to Wesley a letter of less polish, but no less forcible: “ Mr. Wesley says the first message of the preachers is to the lost sheep of England. And are there none in America? They have strayed from England into the wild woods here, and they are running wild after this world. They are drinking their wine in bowls, and are jumping and dancing and serving the devil in the groves and under the green trees. And are not these lost sheep? And will none of the preachers come here. Where is Mr Brownfield? Where is John Pawson? Where is Nicholas Manners? Are they living, and will they not come?”

In October, 1768, Dr. Wrangel, a distinguished Swedish preacher, returning to Sweden after laboring in Philadelphia, dined with Wesley in London, and urged him to extend his marvelous evangelistic system to the New World, and he showed the sincerity of his belief by recommending his convert, John Hood, with his bosom friend, Lambert Wilmer,

two young Philadelphians of rare spiritual gifts, to join the Methodists.

The British Conference of 1768 postponed action on the



FROM THE COPPERPLATE IN THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE.

REV. RICHARD BOARDMAN.

The companion of Joseph Pilmoor, one of the first Methodist missionaries to America.

entreaties from America, but in 1769, in the Conference at Leeds, Wesley spoke of the needs of the work, and called for volunteers. New York was then as many weeks distant from England as it now is in days, and the North Atlantic voyage

was no holiday run. Parliament was ringing with denunciations of the rebellious colonists, and "the church in the wilderness" might turn out to be a hornets' nest. Not a man volunteered. At sunrise next morning Wesley's text was, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Whether the sermon was political, or whether it touched the reluctance of the brethren to undertake this mission, does not appear; but when the call for volunteers was next repeated two experienced preachers, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, "men well reported of by all," offered themselves for the difficult service. A missionary collection was taken, of which £50 was sent to the New York Society "as a token of brotherly love," and £20, which was afterward supplemented by contributions from London and Bristol, was devoted to the expenses of the journey. The British press had only ridicule for the noble project, and mockingly announced certain forthcoming promotions among the Methodists, including "Rev. John Wesley, Bishop of Pennsylvania, and Rev. Charles Wesley, Bishop of Nova Scotia."

The first two foreign missionaries of Methodism would be worthy of more than a casual notice even had their field been some obscure quarter of the globe, but when we consider that that field was our own beloved country, and that we have entered so abundantly into their labors, their personality becomes of commanding interest.

Richard Boardman was thirty-one years old, a pious, amiable man, possessed of a strong understanding, and, according to Wesley's characterization, "greatly beloved and respected by all who knew him. The place and circumstances of his birth are in doubt. He had been traveling circuits in Ireland and the north since 1763. He had come up to the Leeds Conference from the Dales with a great grief on his heart, for the

grass was not yet green over the grave in which the remains of his wife and little daughter lay side by side.

Joseph Pilmoor was a Yorkshireman, only a few months the junior of his colleague, and had been for four years a



DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS.

FROM A COPPERPLATE.

REV. JOSEPH PILMOOR.

One of the pioneer Methodist missionaries in America,
afterward a minister of the Protestant Episcopal
Church in Philadelphia.

traveling preacher. He was early converted and placed by Wesley at Kingswood School, where he made the best use of his time, as is shown by his mental accomplishments and scholarly tastes. The year 1768 he spent in Wales, musing much, as he went his round, upon "the dear Americans" whose cry he had heard at Bristol, and reaching the determination "to sacrifice everything for their sakes."

Amid these exercises he wrote out a solemn covenant with God "to be fully and forever his," and,

though happy in his work, he was drawn "with such longing desires for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom" that, as he says, "I was made perfectly willing to forsake my kindred and native land, and all that was most near and dear to me on earth, that I might spread abroad the honors of his glorious name." When he had volunteered and been accepted the first doubts came. But calling upon God with strong cries and tears, he was delivered, and hesitated no more. He bade farewell to the Conference,

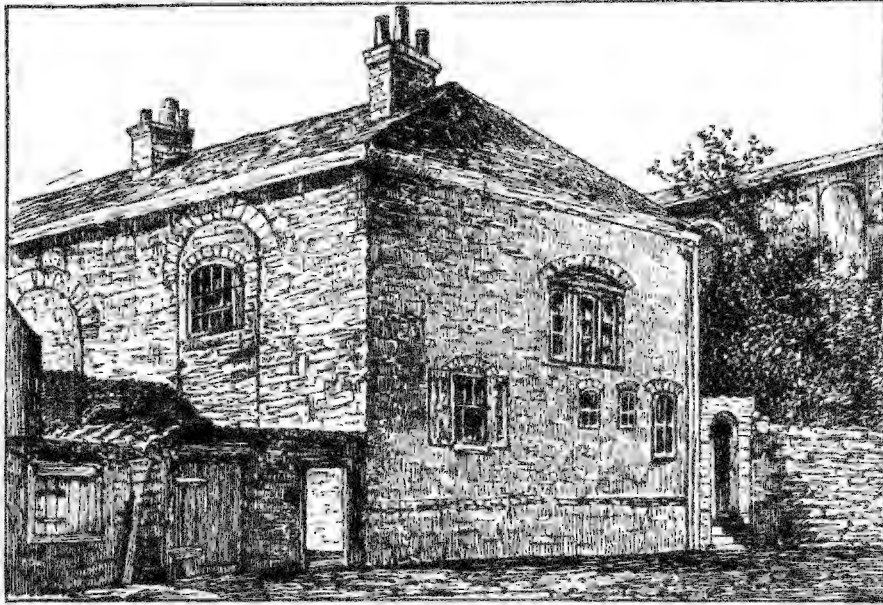
and received the blessing of his aged mother. Standing before his father's door he preached to his fellow-townsmen, who thronged to see that strangest of sights in those days—a foreign missionary

The two missionaries were warmly welcomed in London. The great Whitefield prayed with them, and advised them with a father's tenderness. Charles Wesley gave them his benediction, and they sailed from Gravesend, August 22, 1769, on board the *Mary and Elizabeth*, James Sparks master. They were in high spirits. "We had," said Pilmoor, "what we believed a call from God; we had the approbation and authority of three godly clergymen of the Church of England, and likewise the authority of more than a hundred preachers of the Gospel, who are laboring day and night to save souls from destruction and advance the kingdom of Christ. Hence we concluded we had full power, according to the New Testament, to preach the everlasting Gospel and to do all possible good to mankind."

After a trying voyage of eight weeks, in which the buffetings of the equinoctial gales could not disturb their serenity of soul, the two missionaries disembarked at Gloucester Point, New Jersey. Their first act was to join in a doxology in praise to God for their safe arrival. This done, they walked four miles along the Delaware, to Philadelphia, where they found cordial welcome and entertainment. The Methodists of the city sought them out, and Captain Webb, who had come from New York to receive them, greeted them effusively. "Our souls rejoiced," says Pilmoor, "to meet with such a valiant soldier of Jesus in this distant land." After a day or two the pair separated, Boardman, whose seniority seems to have given him a certain authority, going to New York, and his associate remaining in charge of the

little flock which they had so unexpectedly found in the Quaker capital.

When Boardman reached New York he found that another English preacher had arrived there ahead of him, and had been laboring with success in Wesley Chapel. A few days



OLD WESLEYAN CHAPEL, PEASEHOLM GREEN,
ENGLAND.

Here the American missionaries preached and took their first collection
for their work on their way from Conference.

later the same forerunner of the Conference appointees, then on his way from New York to Maryland, called on Pilmoor in Philadelphia. His name was Robert Williams, and the story of his brief

connection with the work is replete with interest.

Williams was an English local preacher who had been at one time an itinerant in Ireland. He came to America of his own accord, after obtaining Wesley's permission to work here subject to the direction of the regular missionaries. So poor was he that he had to sell his horse to pay his debts, and his worldly store is said to have been reduced to a loaf and a bottle of milk when he arrived at his port of embarkation. His friend Thomas Ashton, a liberal Dublin Methodist, who was then migrating to the New World, provided for his comfort. The vessel made port at Norfolk, in Virginia, late in the summer of 1769, and the story goes that Williams, without an acquaintance in the place, strolled up the main street

at dusk, and choosing a doorstep for a pulpit, took out his hymn book and began to sing. Amid the curious throng, who paused to listen and stare, he knelt and prayed for the welfare of the town and people. The wife of a sea captain offered him shelter, and that night, as he prayed with her household, not only was her own heart touched, but it used to be told among Norfolk Methodists that her absent husband, far away on the billow, was irresistibly drawn that very night to seek and find forgiveness for his sins.

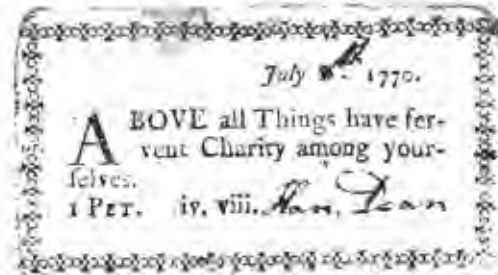
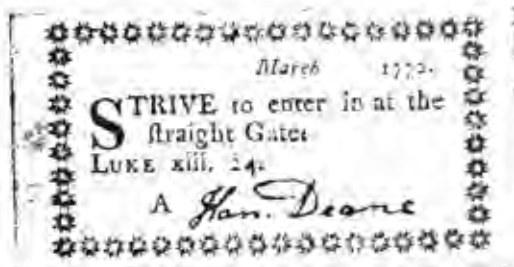
In September Williams was in New York, and the oldest American quarterly ticket in existence is one which he gave to Hannah Dean three weeks before the Mary and Elizabeth reached her moorings in the Delaware.

Though we lose sight of this eager soul-winner for a few months after his passage through Philadelphia in November,



THE EARLIEST OF AMERICAN
QUARTERLY TICKETS.

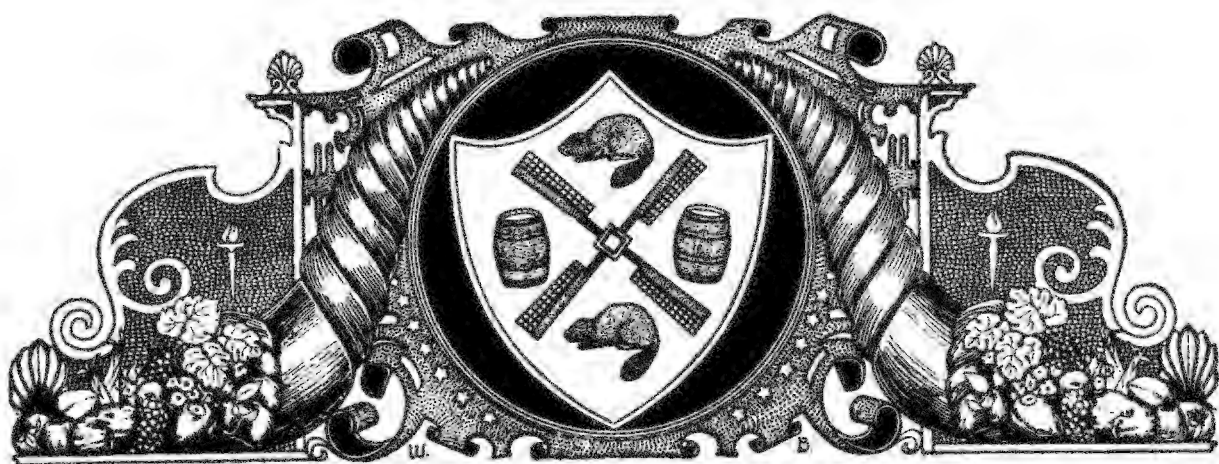
From the original in the library of Drew Theological Seminary.



EARLY QUARTERLY TICKETS.

Given out by Methodist preachers at Wesley Chapel, New York.

1769, we shall again find him in advance of the missionaries—the most untiring of them all. Thus, as has so often been the case in the history of the outspread of Methodism, the way has been prepared for the regular appointee of the Conference by some humble but zealous layman whose devotion has conquered all obstacles in the name of the Lord.



CHAPTER V

Earliest Missionary Labors

BEGINNING AT THE CITIES.—BRIEF TIME LIMIT.—JOHN STREET.—IN JAILS AND ALMSHOUSES.—WATCH NIGHT SERVICE.—ST. GEORGE'S, PHILADELPHIA.—INTERCESSION.—A HEADSTRONG HELPER.

TWO years passed before the Wesleyan Conference sent another pair of missionaries to reinforce the pioneers Boardman and Pilmoor. Meanwhile the little band of noble irregulars—Embury in the North, Strawbridge in the South, Evans in New Jersey, and Webb and Williams all along the line—contributed zealously to the spread of Methodist doctrine, while a few young Marylanders caught inspiration from their spiritual father and began to lift their voices in public exhortation. The two regularly appointed missionaries established their headquarters with the societies in New York and Philadelphia, exchanging stations three or four times a year.

Boardman first arrived in New York in the last of October, 1769, and forthwith paid to the treasurer of the Methodist society £25 16s. on account of the money subscribed by the brethren in the British Conference. The remainder was sent over in the form of Methodist books, which were soon disposed of. On November 1 he began to apply the Wesleyan

system to the condition of the society by means of the following specific regulations:

"Mr. Richard Boardman, Assistant to and Preacher in connection with the Rev John Wesley, Also Philip Embury, Local preacher, and William Lupton, a Trustee and Steward

*Mr. Rich^d Boardman, Assistant to & Preacher in Connection with the
Rev. John Wesley, Also Philip Embury^{Local} Preacher, And Will^m Lupton
Trustee & Steward (in New York) thinking it necessary, that some regulations
should be made, for the Preachers in New York. Agreed, on the 5th of Nov^r 1769
in N. York. & & & & 1st That each Preacher having Labored three
months in N. York, Shall receive three Guineas to provide themselves with
Wearing Apparel —*

*2nd That there shall be Preaching on Sunday morning &
Sunday Evening, Also on Tuesday & Thursday Evenings, And the Preacher
to meet the Society Every Wednesday Evening —*

THE FIRST REGULATIONS FOR THE PREACHERS IN NEW YORK,
NOVEMBER, 1769.

Reproduced from the original entry in the first record book of the Methodist society in New York.

(in New York), thinking it necessary that some regulations should be made for the Preachers in New York, agreed

"1. That each Preacher, having Labored three months in New York, Shall receive three Guineas to provide themselves with Wearing apparel.

"2. That there shall be preaching on Sunday Morning and Sunday Evening, also on Tuesday and Thursday Evenings, and the Preacher to meet the Society Every Wednesday Evening."

In addition to the "quarterage" or salary of three guineas,

the preachers received money to pay for their board and traveling expenses. The preachers' house stood beside the chapel in John Street, and the colored sexton and his wife attended to the comfort of the itinerants, who were generally unmarried men. The house was furnished by loan and gift,



FROM THE ENGRAVING BY RITCHIE IN WAKELEY'S "LOST CHAPTERS."

PETER WILLIAMS.

An early sexton of Wesley Chapel, John Street,
New York.

and the inventory of its contents includes some noteworthy items: nine pictures, set bed curtains, and a small looking-glass, one bed spre, two green window curtains, four silver teaspoons, and three wineglasses.

Boardman was greatly cheered by the prospect in his new charge. He wrote to Wesley of the crowds which thronged the chapel. "There appears," he says, "in the Americans such a willingness to hear the

word as I never saw before." Among the early converts was John Mann, who ministered to the society during the British occupation of the city and afterward helped to found Methodism in Nova Scotia. The religious zeal of his African hearers deeply moved him, especially the distress of one poor slave woman who could neither eat nor sleep because her master would not allow her to attend the meetings.

In the spring of 1770 Pilmoor came over to New York for the first time. "Our coming to America has not been in

vain," he wrote home to England. "Our congregations are large, and we have the pious of most congregations to hear us. The religion of Jesus is a favorite topic in New York. Many of the gay and polite speak much about grace and perseverance." The first care of the two Wesleyans, when they were together in New York, was to secure the chapel property to the Methodists forever, by a deed similar to that in use in the British societies, the original conveyance having vested the title in eight trustees without restrictions.

Pilmoor did not confine his ministry to the chapel walls. He visited Captain Webb at his home in Jamaica, Long Island, and held a "refreshing" meeting there. He carried the consolations of faith to the jails and workhouses. He found hearers in West Chester. "A particular friend took him in his chaise" to Harlem, May 3, 1770, a place about eight miles from the city, where he preached "with great freedom of soul." He preached with great power in the open fields. In his letter to the Conference in England, 1770, he reported about one hundred in society, aside from probationers, and regretted that lack of helpers had kept him and his colleague confined to the cities. He put in a plea for more missionaries, assuring them "they need not be afraid of wanting the comforts of life, for the people are very hospitable. If you send over, we shall gladly provide for them."

The winter of 1770-1771 brought many converts into the society in New York. Pilmoor had introduced some of the most popular features of the Wesleyan worship—the love feast, intercession, and watch night—and on Saturday evenings he held a young men's meeting which "crowned all the rest." The young people were "all on fire for God and heaven," and an elderly gentleman who witnessed their joyous demonstrations declared with weeping eyes that he would

not have missed the exaltation of that sight for £50. "I heartily love all the lovers of Jesus," Pilmoor once said; "and in token of his sincerity he vowed, after supping with



DRAWN BY G. WILLARD BONTE.

FROM A LITHOGRAPH.

THE PREACHERS' HOUSE IN JOHN STREET, NEW YORK.

The first American Methodist parsonage.

some of the city paupers, that he found more satisfaction in their conversation than in that of the most refined and polite citizens who are strangers to God."

In February, 1771, Boardman resumed charge in New

York, but the gracious work went on and thirty were added to the society in a single month. In May the two missionaries again exchanged places, and so continued to do at intervals of a few months until the spring of 1772, when reinforcements from abroad enabled them to range more widely.

The Philadelphia society prospered under the watch-care of the two missionaries. Pilmoor was its first regular preacher, as Webb was its founder. He found in the city Edward Evans, one of Whitefield's converts, who now allied himself with the Wesleyan evangelists. He preached in Philadelphia and vicinity in 1770, and in 1771 became pastor of a church in Greenwich Township, New Jersey. He died in the autumn of 1771. Pilmoor, who loved him and preached his funeral sermon, said, "As he lived so he died, full of faith and full of obedient love." As he was the earliest native American to begin to preach, his right to be called the first American Methodist preacher seems to be secure, though, dying before the organization of the Conference, his name had no place in our history until Atkinson rescued it from oblivion, and placed it beside that of Richard Owen and William Watters.

The Wesleyan pioneers found the Methodist society in Philadelphia poorly housed. The meetings were held in rigging lofts, carpenters' shops, and even in "a pothouse in Loxley's Court." But Pilmoor's congregations soon outgrew these scant accommodations. On his first Sabbath in the city he preached in the afternoon on the common, "from the stage erected for the horse race," to an immense throng "of genteel persons, who," he says, "behaved with the utmost attention while I declared Christ Jesus the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people." At the day's end, after preaching twice and listening to "a profitable sermon" by Rev. Mr. Stringer, rector of St. Paul's Church, and exhorting the so-

ciety "to walk worthy of their high calling," he wrote: "This was the first Sabbath I spent in America, and it was truly a delight. My soul was abundantly blessed in preaching the word of life to others, and seemed perfectly willing to sacrifice everything for their good."

At five o'clock the next morning he preached again to a good congregation, though the croakers had thought that early preaching "would not answer in America." He wrote to Wesley of his auspicious entrance upon his work: "There seems to be a great and effectual door open in this country, and I hope many souls will be gathered in." He continued preaching twice a day, generally, besides meeting classes and individual inquirers. Williams and Webb passed through the city and lent him their aid. A spirit of revival broke out. "They hear as for their lives," writes the preacher. Thus before the first month was gone it became evident that the society must have a new and larger meeting-room. Just then the shell of an unfinished church was sold at auction. It had cost £2,000, and bankrupted the "Dutch Presbyterians" who had built it. It was knocked down to a scatter-brained youth for £700, and he was glad to sell his white elephant to the Methodists for £50 less than he had bid for it. "Thus the Lord provided for us," said Pilmoor.

On Friday, November 24, 1769, probably the very day of the purchase, he took possession of the church, and preached "with great liberty of spirit upon that noble passage of Scripture: "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." The building was fifty-five feet by eighty-five feet, and was for many years by far the largest Methodist church edifice in America. It was still far from completion, but the preacher

Captain Webb Preaching in the Sail-loft.

Drawn by Thure de Thulstrup.



wrote in his Journal, on the evening of his first sermon within its walls, "Peradventure that God who enabled him [Zerubbabel] to finish the temple at Jerusalem will, by his providence and blessing, make way for us to finish the church we have bought and set apart for his praise."

The possession of a large church building gave such prominence to the hitherto obscure society that the preacher felt



FROM THE ENGRAVING BY J. ROGERS.

THE OLD STATE HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA.

Pilmoor preached from the steps of this building, afterward celebrated as "Independence Hall."

it his duty to read publicly to his congregation a statement of their "faith and body of principles." Of the eight points the most important was the second: "That it, the Methodist society, was at first and is still intended for the benefit of all those of every denomination who, being truly convinced of sin and the danger they are exposed to, earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come."

After making this statement Pilmoor says: "I told the

people we left our native land not with a design to make divisions among them, but to gather together in one the people of God that are scattered abroad and revive spiritual religion. This is our one point—Christ, who died for us, to live in us and reign over us in all things.”

In this first winter in Philadelphia Pilmoor visited and addressed the inmates in the jails and benevolent institutions, penetrated into the surrounding country on preaching excursions, established a Friday noon prayer service called “Intercession,” held children’s meetings, and inaugurated, on March 23, 1770, the first American love feast, when “the people behaved with as much piety and decorum as if they had been for many years acquainted with the economy of the Methodists.” He had now been five months in America. The society in his care had nearly doubled its membership, it had bought and partially paid for a spacious house, and the city and the country around had heard the Gospel faithfully proclaimed.

Webb, Williams, and Strawbridge were Pilmoor’s occasional visitors and welcome helpers in this first winter, and in midsummer of 1770, when Pilmoor had returned to his beloved flock after four months in New York, he received a fresh proffer of help. John King, a young man from the old country, called, and asked to be assigned work as a preacher. He claimed to have seen service among the Methodists in England, but as he brought no credentials the wary pastor declined to employ him. Whereupon the young man took the matter in his own hands, advertised that he would preach on Sunday in the Potter’s Field, and did so to a great multitude. His zeal and simplicity secured him a license. “Though he is by no means fit for the city, he is well qualified to do good in the country,” wrote Pilmoor after hearing his proba-

tionary sermon in St. George's. The young preacher went into Delaware with his message, and thence into Maryland, where, as some say, he preached the first Methodist sermon in Baltimore. One tradition has it that his pulpit was a blacksmith's block at the corner of French and Front Streets.



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

FROM A WOODCUT.

ST. GEORGE'S METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

The oldest Methodist church building in the New World.

He is said to have been invited once, and once only, to the pulpit of St. Paul's, "where," says one of his hearers, "he made the dust fly from the old red velvet cushions." He was for eight years a useful itinerant. The necessities of a dependent family forced him to locate about 1778. He lived in North Carolina and practiced medicine, which profession he had studied abroad. He died at Newberne, in 1794, having "continued to the end an earnest, fearless, and faithful preacher of the Gospel."

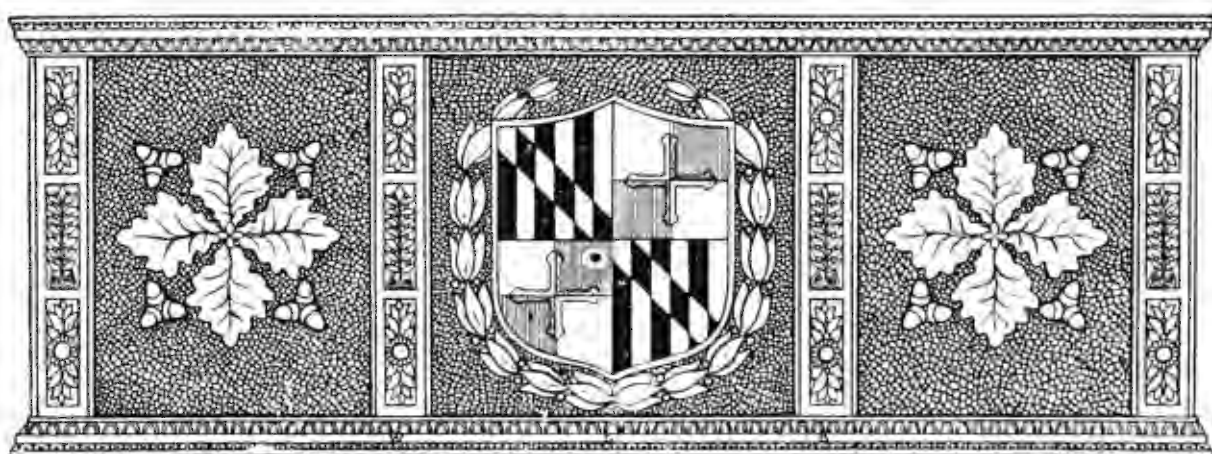
It was to the stentorian John King that Wesley addressed the letter so characteristic of his parental tone toward his helpers: "Scream no more, at the peril of your soul. God

now warns you by me, whom he has set over you. Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. It was said of our Lord, 'He shall not cry;' the word properly means, he shall not scream. Herein be a follower of me as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently, but I never scream. I never strain myself; I dare not; I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul." The latter part of the epistle is interesting in the light of King's rejection of Pilmoor's authority:

"O John, pray for an advisable and teachable temper. By nature you are very far from it; you are stubborn and headstrong. Your last letter was written in a very wrong spirit. If you cannot take advice from others, surely you might take it from

"Your affectionate brother,

"JOHN WESLEY "



CHAPTER VI

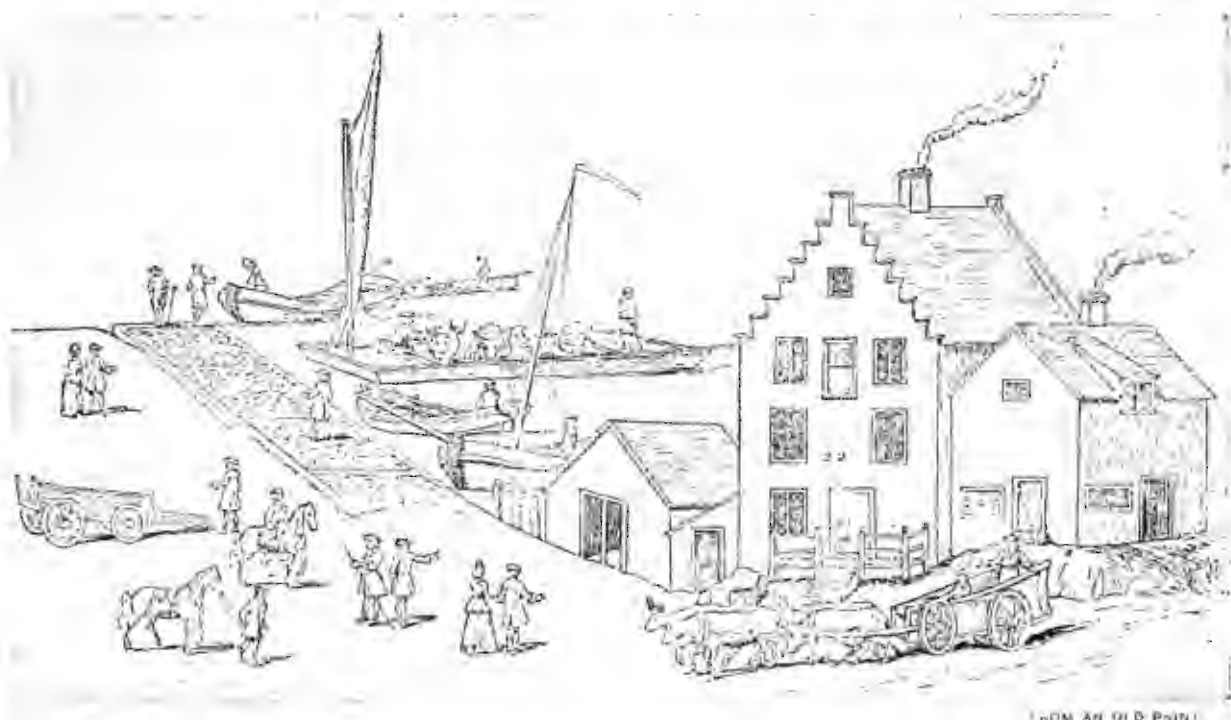
Pioneering

NEW JERSEY AND DELAWARE.—FIRST SOCIETIES IN BALTIMORE.—WORK
AND WORKERS IN VIRGINIA.—PILMOOR'S SOUTHERN EXCURSION.—
DEVEREUX JARRATT.—A FRIENDLY CLERGYMAN.

THE missionaries who disembarked at New York or Philadelphia "must needs go through" New Jersey, and that State early and frequently enjoyed their ministrations. Webb was probably the first to preach Methodist doctrine there, on his way from New York to the Quaker city. Boardman found an audience at Trenton on his first journey to New York, in 1769. The next year Pilmoor makes note of preaching at Birdington (Bordentown) and Burlington, at Gloucester and Trenton. Webb formed a society in Burlington in December, 1770, with Joseph Toy as its leader. Toy soon removed to Trenton, and led a class there; he was afterward a successful itinerant preacher. About the same time Edward Evans, the Methodist, went to minister to the society in Greenwich Chapel, near Clarksboro, New Jersey. These were the beginnings.

That knight-errant of the Gospel, Webb, was the Methodist pioneer also in Delaware. In November, 1769, he came to Philadelphia from the neighborhood of Wilmington with a

glowing report of successful endeavors. A year later young John King went thither from Philadelphia, and "God made him the instrument of abundance of good to the country people." Pilmoor visited Wilmington, Newark, and New Castle in April, 1771, and a year later Asbury, from his station in Philadelphia, traversed some of the same ground. Societies



BROOKLYN FERRY HOUSE AND BOATS, 1746.

began to be formed, and the foundation of the splendid Delaware and peninsula Methodism of modern times was laid.

On June 21, 1772, Pilmoor founded the first Methodist society in Baltimore. Strawbridge, Williams, and King had preached there, but not until this visit of the Wesleyan missionary did Methodism effect a permanent lodgment in the city which has since figured so prominently in our denominational and national history. His first sermon in the place was in the German church, on June 11, 1772, to a little company, from the words, "So run that ye may obtain." He continued for eleven days, preaching "on a pleasant green near the Episcopal church," also in the German and Episcopal

freedom and satisfaction in prayer that the Lord would
sanctify all his afflictions and make all things
work together for good—

~~The~~ Took leave of my hospitable friend, and went
on towards the Long River— I had not gone far before
I saw two wonderfully I had seen previously by
staying all night with the Alutians— they are build-
ing a saw-mill by the road side and have made it
almost impossible, so that if I had gone on the
night as I intended, I should have been in the
greatest danger of my life— After much dif-
ficulty I got up over, and listened on to
the Boat— the tide just ran out, inched along
on edge of reaching the end at the eastern
end of it before the flowing of the tide, but
was too late— It was a stranger to the nature
of the shifting sands, I did not know what was
best for me to do— The road ^{was} here on the beach
and to return fifteen miles over the River was
very discouraging, to stay all night upon the
shore, without any one to speak to, very dis-
agreeable, and to find the water very dangerous
However I ventured on, but I had not gone far
before I was at a full stop— The River stood
still and would not move one way nor another
so that I was in the greatest danger of being
lost— The Boat came on very rapidly,
the waves rolled against the sides of the shore
and presently flowed over its deck— In the

PHOTOGRAPHED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT.

A PAGE FROM JOSEPH PILMOOR'S JOURNAL.

From the original manuscript. By the courtesy of The Historical Society of the Philadelphia Conference.

churches, and "under a fine shady tree" at "a place about a mile from the town, called the Point." Many attended, and on June 22 he met "a few serious persons in the German church, and proposed to form a society. Some of them resolved to give up themselves to the Lord, so I joined them together." The same night he preached at the Point and organized another society, with twenty-five members and the promise of many more. "There is now," he wrote a few weeks later, "an open door in this town, and nothing is wanted but a good, zealous preacher, for the people are well affected to the cause of God, and wish us prosperity in the name of the Lord. My heart is much united with them, and I would like to continue longer in these parts, but the 'tutelary cloud' moves southward, and I am compelled to go forward."



DRAWN BY F. E. FLINTOFF.

THE GERMAN CHURCH, BALTIMORE.

Where Asbury's friend, Rev. Philip Otterbein, ministered, and where Pilmoor "joined together" the first Methodist class in Baltimore, June 22, 1772.

At Annapolis, where he preached under "a very large tree," he took boat for Virginia, and on July 17 was in Norfolk preaching to a few people in the theater. Methodist preaching was not a prime novelty in that southern seaport, for Robert Williams, who had landed there in 1769, had revisited the place in the spring of this very year, and sang and preached from the courthouse steps to a laughing and guying throng.

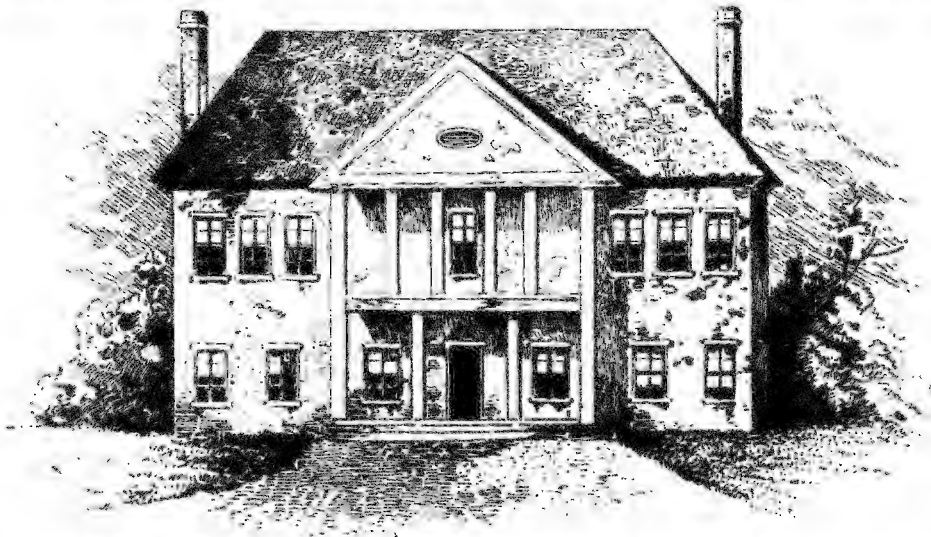
They took Williams's loud cries and fervent prayers for the ravings of a lunatic, and thought he was swearing profanely when he besought them in God's name to repent lest they should die in their sins and be damned and go to hell. Such expressions were so strange to Norfolk ears! Yet he soon gained a respectful hearing, and on his next northern visit stirred the hearts of the missionaries with his account of what the Lord was doing in Virginia.

It was four months after Pilmoor's advent in Virginia that the first societies in that province were gathered. Meanwhile he had preached in Norfolk and "over the water" in Portsmouth; in the state house yard and in the playhouse at Williamsburg, then the provincial capital; he also preached in the tavern dining room at Yorktown, where some young collegians tempted him with rationalistic questions, and in another inn at Hampton, though so shaken with ague that he could scarcely hold up his head. He even ventured into the border of North Carolina, where the poor and ignorant people heard his message gratefully and a good planter showed him hospitality. On November 14 he read and explained the Rules in Portsmouth, and found twenty-seven willing to assent to them. This was the pioneer Methodist society in the Old Dominion. Two days afterward twenty-six others were united in a second society in Norfolk. "I have long wept and prayed that God would raise up a people in this place," he said, "and now my prayer is answered, and I clap my hands exultingly in hallelujahs to the Lord the King."

Two days afterward Williams arrived in Norfolk, bringing with him the Maryland youth, William Watters, who was being broken to the itinerant harness.

Watters was the first native American member of a Conference, and, excepting the brief career of Edward Evans,

was the first native American Methodist itinerant. He was the son of a vestryman in Baltimore County, Maryland, and was in his eighteenth year when the Methodist preachers came into his neighborhood, puzzling young and old with



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

FROM THE WOODCUT IN HOWE'S HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS.

THE OLD CAPITOL, WILLIAMSBURG, VA.,

Where Joseph Pilmoor Preached in 1772.

their doctrine of the "new birth." Many were awakened, this youth among them. In May, 1771, at midday, several good people met to pray that he might be converted. As they sang,

Give to the winds thy fears ;
 Hope and be undismayed ;
 God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears,
 God shall lift up thy head,

tears flowed from his eyes, and he says: "I felt a lively hope that the Lord whom I sought would suddenly come to his temple. A divine light beamed through my inmost soul and in a few minutes encircled me round, surpassing the brightness of the sun. My burden was gone, my sorrow fled, my soul and all that was within me rejoiced in hope of the glory of God, while I beheld such a fullness and willingness in the Lord Jesus to save lost sinners, and my soul so rested in him, that I could now for the first time call Jesus Christ

Lord by the Holy Ghost. The hymn being concluded, we all fell upon our knees, but my prayers were turned into praises. A supernatural power penetrated every faculty of my mind and body. In the same house where I was born a child of wrath I was born a child of grace.”/

The young convert counted his admission to the society “a greater blessing than to be made a prince,” and at once began to tell others of the peace that had come to his soul. In October, 1772, “being fully persuaded of his call to the ministry, and that it was his duty to go wherever a kind Providence should point the way,” he cheerfully accepted Williams’s invitation to accompany him on his preaching trip through Virginia to Norfolk. In all the three hundred miles they met very few who knew experimentally anything of the Lord Jesus Christ, and even Pilmoor’s Methodists in Norfolk seemed cold and dull in comparison with Strawbridge’s shouting converts in Maryland.

In December, 1772, Pilmoor left Williams and his young helper to care for the work in southeastern Virginia, and set off with horse and chaise and provender and provisions on an extended southern journey. At Newberne, N. C., where he spent the Christmas holidays, he was hospitably entertained. At Wilmington the innkeeper would take no compensation. South of Brunswick his troubles began. One day his chaise broke down. The next he durst not ride for fear his horse should break his legs between the logs of the corduroy road. After dark, January 18, 1773, the fagged-out brute drew the rickety chaise into Charleston and a negro boy piloted the preacher to the friendly door of Crosse’s tavern. On the evening of the 22d he preached in the general Baptist church to a company “not large, but very serious.” After a fortnight’s sojourn in the metropolis of South Carolina,

preaching almost daily, he pushed five days' march further, into Savannah, then a busy trading town of about three thousand inhabitants. Here on Sunday, February 7, he preached in the Lutheran church, on Wednesday he visited Whitefield's Orphanage, ten miles from the city, and on the following Monday he again turned his face northward. He retraced his own route and was well received all along the line, the pulpits of many churches, Episcopalian, German, Baptist, and Independent, being opened to him. After nearly losing his life in the fords and the ferries he rode into Norfolk on April 6. Great was the rejoicing over his safe return. "They treat me," he says, "as if I were an angel of God."

When he was back in Philadelphia, after his long absence, he thus reviewed its experience: "It is above a year since I left this city. I set out with a consciousness of duty, and was determined to obey what to me was a call from above. I was totally unacquainted with the people, the road, and everything else. I only knew that there were multitudes of souls scattered through a vast extent of country, and was willing to encounter any difficulty and undergo the greatest hardships so I might win them to Christ. My plan was to follow the leadings of Providence and go wherever the 'tutelary cloud' should direct. With this view I turned my face to the south, and went above a thousand miles through the provinces, visiting most of the towns between Philadelphia and Savannah, where I preached the Gospel of Christ. At Savannah I had several invitations to go forward into Florida, but my mind was so strangely drawn toward the people where I had already been, who entreated me to visit them again, that I resolved to comply with their request and venture through the country again. I found to my great satisfaction that I had not labored in vain. I have been in

many dangers by land and by water. My difficulties in passing through so many provinces without a guide have been very considerable and often discouraging. I can say with the utmost confidence I have done it with all sincerity and uprightness of heart, and, blessed be God, I have not labored



FROM AN OLD WOODCUT.

CHRIST CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

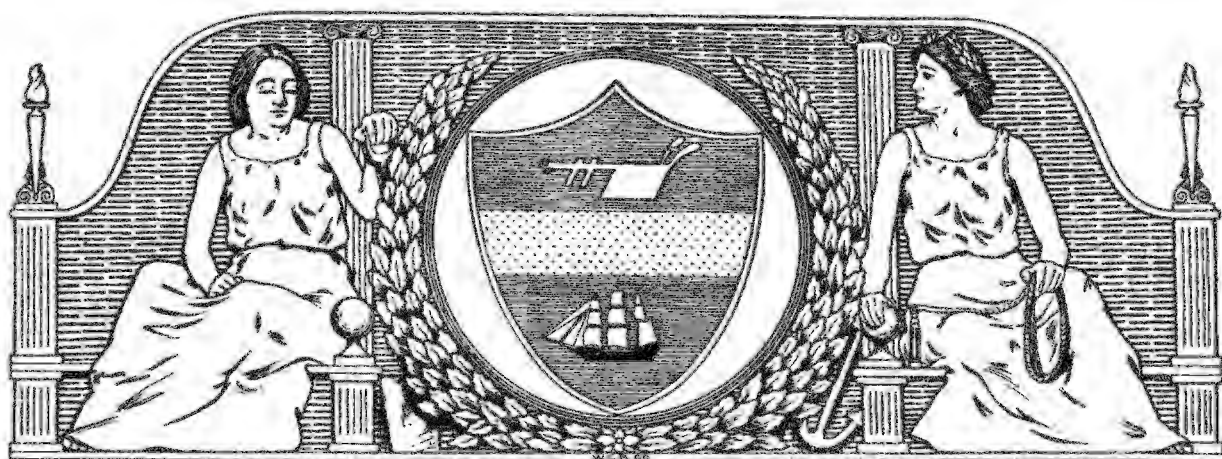
In this Anglican church the earlier Wesleyan missionaries worshiped and received the sacraments.

in vain. His presence was with me. His word ran and was glorified, and sinners were savingly converted to God."

It was during Pilmoor's absence in the south that Williams made his great stroke for the cause of Christ. Several religious young men invited him to Petersburg, and after preaching in the theater there he began to go out into the neighboring country. Here, in March, 1773, he met the Rev Devereux Jarratt, rector of Bath, whose earnest evan-

gelical preaching had resulted in revivals, and who had formed his converts into societies resembling those of Wesley. The zealous rector was impressed by the "plain, simple-hearted character" of Williams, from whom he learned "that the Methodists were true members of the Church of England: that their design was to build up and not divide the Church; that the preachers did not assume the office of priests, administered neither the ordinance of baptism nor the Lord's Supper, but looked to the parish ministers in all places for these; that they traveled to call sinners to repentance, to join proper subjects in society for mutual edification, and to do all they could for the spiritual edification of these societies."

By these conversations and by the Methodist books which he carried Williams won the powerful support of the rector, who, in turn, exerted himself to form societies in southern Virginia and the border of North Carolina, which ultimately became a veritable nursery of Methodism. Jarratt was for many years the beneficent patron of the itinerant preachers, an honored figure at their quarterly meetings, and his friendship was enjoyed and prized by Asbury



CHAPTER VII

"I Seek a Circulation of the Preachers"

WILL WESLEY COME OUT?—DISSATISFACTION.—FRANCIS ASBURY BECOMES MR. WESLEY'S AMERICAN LIEUTENANT.—THE YOUTH AND THE MAN.—THE VOYAGE.—SYSTEM AND ORDER.—"PREACHING THE PEOPLE AWAY."

FROM the fall of 1769, when the pioneer Wesleyan missionary preachers landed in America, to the autumn of 1771, when their two brethren disembarked, Methodism in the colonies had enjoyed two years of progress. There were as yet no Conferences, and the total membership was a little over three hundred. Embury, Strawbridge, and Webb were still busy; King and Williams had thrust their sickles into a field white with the harvest, and Boardman and Pilmoor, the accredited representatives of Wesley, had labored faithfully with the New York and Philadelphia societies, besides making sallies into the country. New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland had been entered. But there was as yet no attempt to extend Methodism upon that aggressive and systematic plan which has been a leading factor in the success of the denomination. The initiative and executive powers of Boardman, who was nominally the head of the work in America, were not equal to such an undertaking.

The man who was to direct the successful campaign was still in the itinerant harness in England—Francis Asbury. Wesley's heart was still yearning for the welfare of America. His thoughts were often upon the mission there, and upon the two young men whose shoulders bore its burden. Although nearing his threescore years and ten, he was strongly tempted to follow his inclinations and visit the American



DRAWN BY G. WILLARD BONTÉ.

FROM A WOODCUT.

THE REPUTED BIRTHPLACE OF FRANCIS ASBURY.

colonies. His friend Whitefield had just crossed the ocean for the thirteenth time, and was ranging from his orphanage in Savannah to New Hampshire, preaching almost daily up to the hour of his sudden death, on September 30, 1770. To him, on February 21, 1770, John Wesley wrote: "Who knows but before your return I may pay another visit to the New World? I have been strongly solicited by several of our friends in New York and Philadelphia. They urge many reasons, some of which appear to be of considerable weight;

and my age [sixty-seven] is no objection at all; for I bless God my health is not barely as good but abundantly better in several respects than when I was five-and-twenty. But there are so many reasons on the other side that as yet I can determine nothing; so I must wait for further light.

For the present I must beg of you to supply my lack of service by encouraging our preachers as you judge best; who are as yet comparatively young and inexperienced."

Some of his "reasons on the other side" we know. He was the sole and unsupported executive head of the work in the three kingdoms and had no lieutenant competent to fill his place. He said, "If I go to America, I must do a thing which I hate as bad as I hate the devil—I must keep a secret!" For if the home societies were aware of his intention, they would certainly have protested loudly. This was the time, also, of the acrimonious controversy between him and Toplady, and a period of great domestic disquiet.

In the British Wesleyan Conference of 1770 "America" appears for the first time—as a single circuit, served by four preachers, Pilmoor, Boardman, King, and Williams. America reported a total membership of three hundred and sixteen to the Conference of 1771. With the report came the urgent appeals of the Americans for more helpers. The Conference of that year was agitated with the Calvinistic controversy which ultimately caused the secession of an influential party in the connection. But the Americans were not neglected. Five preachers offered to go, and two were accepted.

The two volunteers for America from the Conference of 1771 were Francis Asbury and Richard Wright. Of the latter's previous career in the itinerancy little is known, and his term of service in America was brief and uneventful. But to his colleague, more than to any other of its preachers,

American Methodism owes its form, its spirit, and its vast achievement.

The elder Asburys were well-to-do people in the parish of Handsworth, in Staffordshire. The son was born "near the foot of Hampstead Bridge, about four miles from Birmingham, August 20 or 21, 1795." The father, a farmer and gardener



DRAWN BY G. WILLARD BONTÉ.

FROM A WOODCUT.

MANWOOD COTTAGE, HANDSWORTH, STAFFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND.

In which Asbury began his itinerant ministry.

for two wealthy landowners, was in easy circumstances. The mother was a woman of intelligence, of a singularly tender and loving nature, and genuinely pious. Francis, the only son, was carefully nurtured in the religion of the Established Church. He left school early, having "such horrible dread" of the master's birch, and was apprenticed for six and a half years to a button maker. While yet a lad he heard Wesley's

preachers, and was convinced that their way, though strange, was best for him. Beginning very humbly, and speaking in his father's house, he became a local preacher at the age of seventeen. Five years' apprenticeship at this work qualified him for the itinerancy, and at the close of his fifth year as a traveling preacher he volunteered, and was accepted, to reinforce the little band of pioneers in the New World.

Wesley's keen eye for character discerned in his young helper the germs of these qualities which were to be of such conspicuous service to the cause and he designated him for the leadership, young though he was; probably the junior of the six English preachers in America.

Bidding farewell to his affectionate mother, to whose support in her protracted widowhood he was to contribute for many years out of his scanty salary, Asbury repaired to Bristol, with little baggage and less gold, to meet Wright and set sail with him. The hospitable Methodists of Bristol were true to their reputation in fitting out the two missionaries. Asbury kept a journal of the voyage. He prayed much, read his Bible much, meditated much, and preached frequently standing on the deck with his back against the swaying mast. These sentences which he wrote on shipboard open the earnest man's soul to our vision:

“Whither am I going?

“To the New World.

“What to do? To gain honor?

“No, if I know my own heart.

“To get money?

“No, I am going to live to God, and bring others so to do.”

After a voyage of fifty days the ship passed up the Delaware and the two missionaries reached Philadelphia on October 27, 1771, where Pilmoor and the little society greeted

them with great cordiality. "The people looked on us with pleasure," wrote Asbury, "bidding us welcome with fervent affection, and receiving us as angels of God." They preached in the large church there, and after a few days separated for



FROM THE ENGRAVING BY WELLSTOOD IN THE LADIES' REPOSITORY, AUGUST, 1867.

MRS. ELIZABETH ASBURY.

The mother of the pioneer bishop.

their respective fields, Wright going down into the Eastern Shore of Maryland to Bohemia Manor, where Whitefield had been a welcome guest, and Asbury going to New York. "I

trust he will be a special instrument in the hands of God, turning many to righteousness," wrote Pilmoor after seeing him safely on his way. On his way through the Jerseys he stopped to preach in the courthouse at Burlington, and, turning aside to Staten Island, spent the Sabbath with Peter Van Pelt, in whose house he preached thrice on that day. This was the beginning of a work on that island which soon warranted the organization of a class and has ever since flourished abundantly.

On Monday, November 11, 1771, Asbury came up the bay from Staten Island and landed in New York. Boardman welcomed him as a brother, and the next day the young itinerant preached in the Wesley Chapel, John Street, from the text, "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." He noted with emotion the effect of his words upon the audience, and especially upon the negroes, who from the first seem to have been drawn to the Methodist meetings in New York. Of the people in general Asbury wrote, "I think the Americans are more ready to receive the word than the English."

Yet he perceived a disposition in the preachers to confine their activities to the vicinity of New York and Philadelphia, which already had considerable congregations comfortably housed, and not to push out into the back country, where the most crying need for spiritual religion existed. This tendency to "settle," instead of being aggressive traveling evangelists, he resolved to combat with all his might. "I am fixed to the Methodist plan," he writes; and again, "I have not yet the thing which I seek—a circulation of preachers, to avoid partiality and popularity." And though there were many obstacles and temptations from which he was not exempt—for many a congregation would have been glad to have him for

its settled pastor—his indomitable perseverance on this point established the itinerant plan, which kept the preachers even with the advancing tide of migration, and, under God, contributed largely to save the newly opened continent for Christ.



ENGRAVED BY J. C. BUTTRE.

MRS. ANN DOTY DISOSWAY.

Wife of Israel Disosway, Esq., a member of the first Methodist society on Staten Island, and for many years a leading Methodist woman of New York and vicinity.

The cold of a northern winter did not benumb Asbury's spirit. The thought of two preachers being in one town together greatly disturbed him. His activity in that first bitter season was an earnest of his future labors. The little fire

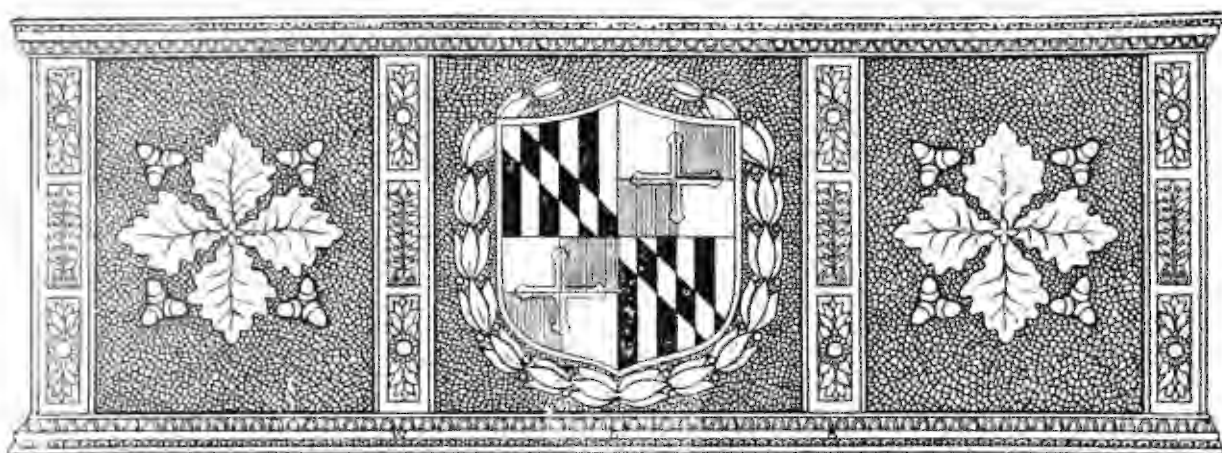
started on Staten Island was diligently fed, several families opening their houses to preaching and their hearts to the word. The towns of Westchester County, just above New York—West Farms, Mamaroneck, Rye, East Chester, New Rochelle, to which Pilmoor had penetrated—were now reached with some regularity. The red mud of the Jersey roads had not settled in the spring of 1772 when Asbury accomplished the hard journey to Philadelphia, preaching en route, as was his custom, wherever the hearing ear was offered. His example or his urgent exhortation—for he can hardly yet have commanded the men who were his seniors in years and in the work—aroused his colleagues. Boardman seems to have planned the work for the first half of 1772 on a large and systematic scale. He himself was to enter New England, and we know that he did reach Providence, and probably Boston; Pilmoor was to attack the South; Wright was to go to New York, and Asbury to remain in Philadelphia. Asbury interpreted his instructions very broadly. Without neglecting his charge he crossed the Delaware into New Jersey and founded a wide circuit of preaching places to be served by the preacher of Philadelphia. “I hope,” he says, “that before long about seven preachers of us will spread over seven hundred or eight hundred miles.” He certainly covered his share, getting out into Pennsylvania, Delaware, and the Eastern Shore of Maryland from his station in Philadelphia. He enforced the Rules strictly, and offended many by excluding them from the society meetings. “While I stay the Rules must be attended to,” he wrote; “I cannot suffer myself to be guided by half-hearted Methodists.” In midsummer Boardman made a new disposition of his forces, by which Asbury was sent back to New York while he himself took charge at Philadelphia.

Asbury found fault with Wright, his predecessor at John Street, in 1772, for holding his love feast with open doors. He undertook to set the affairs of the society in better order. Public preaching was appointed for Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday nights, besides the Sunday services and Saturday evening exhortations; the early morning Sunday service (5 A. M.) was agreed to; in spite of opposition he forced the rule to exclude the public from meetings of the society; it was agreed to take collections weekly and quarterly; the preacher also insisted on Sunday night being the best time to meet the society, some vainly opposing; it was decided that the preacher should hold children's meetings, and the matter of "spreading the books" was talked over, but not determined.

Soon afterward Asbury appointed a collector and imposed Wesley's rigid financial system, with the result of sending the receipts up at a rapid ratio—£73, £87, £116 in successive periods of five months each.

These reforms were not effected without friction. At a meeting of the officary on October 9, 1772, Asbury's Journal testifies to "sharp debates" and personalities: "Mr. L—— [Lupton] told me I had already preached the people away, and intimated that the whole work would be destroyed by me."

The next day came Wesley's letter, "in which he required a strict attention to discipline," and promoted the young disciplinarian to be "assistant"—that is, his own assistant; the virtual head of the Methodist societies in America.



CHAPTER VIII

Rapid Organization

ASBURY AS GENERAL ASSISTANT.—A QUARTERLY MEETING.—CHAPEL-BUILDING IN BALTIMORE.—WEBB IN ENGLAND.—THOMAS RANKIN AND GEORGE SHADFORD.—A NEW CHIEF.—A CONFERENCE CALLED.

GREAT commanders like Wesley do not lack advices from distant parts of the battlefield. He knew the fiber of "Franky" Asbury, as he called him, when he sent him across the sea, and through his reports and the letters of others he kept his keen eye on the work and all the workers in the colonies. In the autumn of 1772 came his dispatch deposing the easygoing Boardman, and conferring temporarily the superintendency of Methodism on the American continent upon Francis Asbury, a young man of twenty-seven, uneducated and unordained. Boardman was a most amiable soul, and acquiesced in the change without a murmur, though Pilmoor could not help thinking and saying that his colleague and himself had been misrepresented to Wesley.

In October, 1772, the young leader set out from New York for the South, preaching as he went. Passing through New Jersey and an angle of Pennsylvania, he came to Maryland, where he noted great changes for good, "notwithstanding-

ing the weakness of the instruments and some little irregularities.” The weak instruments were, of course, Strawbridge and his helpers, and the chief irregularity was, naturally, Strawbridge’s practice of administering the sacraments. “Men who neither feared God nor regarded man—swearers, liars, cock-fighters, card-players, horse-racers, drunkards, etc.—are now so changed as to become new men, and are filled with the praises of God.”

In one Maryland household Asbury learned that a young man of the family had gone into Virginia with Williams, feeling himself called to preach. This was William Watters. Two days before Christmas Asbury held a quarterly meeting at the home of Joseph Presbury, in Gunpowder Neck, and stationed the Maryland preachers, Strawbridge, Owen, with King in Frederick County and Webster and Rollins across the bay. From the collections the sum of £8 was apportioned to Strawbridge, the family man, and £6 to King and Asbury, the bachelors. The proceedings are summarized in Asbury’s Journal in the interrogatory form still so familiar to everyone who reads the Minutes of our Annual Conferences.

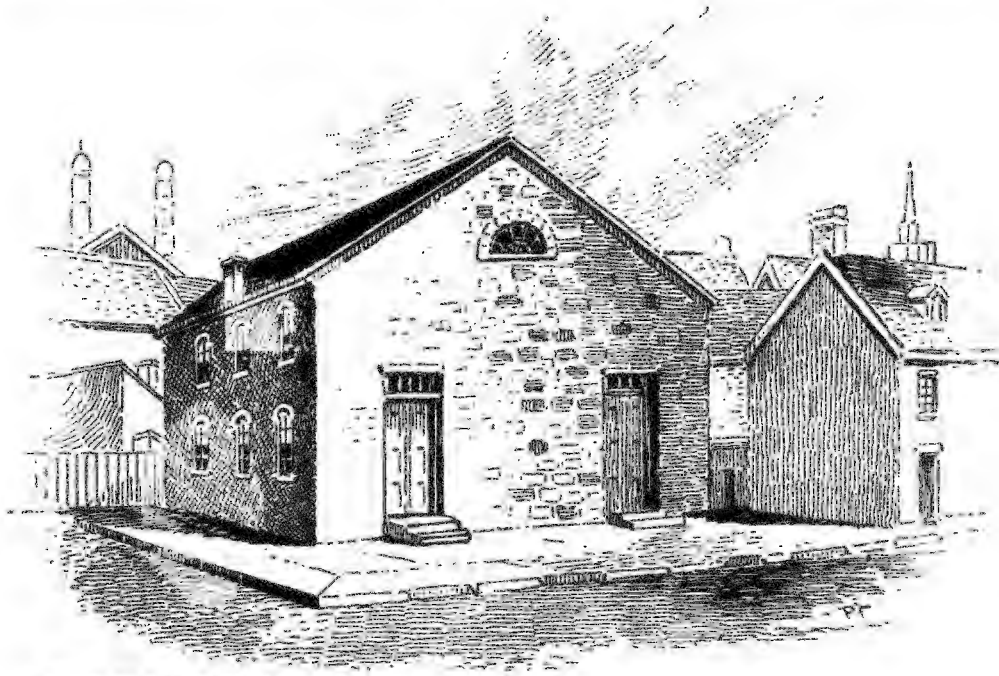
The question most warmly discussed was, “Will the people be contented without our administering the sacrament?” This was the first outcry of the sacramental difficulty which became such a rock of offense to the fathers. In England the Wesleyan societies were still within the pale of the Established Church. Wesley was a loyal minister of that Church. His preachers were laymen, and so far as he could control them their meetings were so timed as not to conflict with attendance upon the services in the parish churches, and members of society were admonished to receive baptism and Communion at the hands of the parish clergy. This was often distasteful even in England, where many of the clergy were men

of unspiritual lives and tastes. In the American colonies, especially in Maryland and Virginia, where the Anglican clergy were openly worldly, and even vicious, the Methodists preferred to receive the Communion from those humble preachers who had broken to them the bread of life, even though apostolic hands had not been laid upon their heads. Strawbridge had no patience with ecclesiastical bonds, and the people stood by him. "I told them," said Asbury, who was much displeased by the irregularity, "that I would not agree to it at that time, and insisted on our abiding by our Rules. But Mr. Boardman had given them their way at a quarterly meeting held here before, and I was obliged to connive at some things for the sake of peace." After passing the character of the preachers the little band "parted in peace."

On January 3, 1773, Asbury preached his first sermon in Baltimore, beginning about dawn in the house of Captain Patten, a friendly Irishman at "The Point." He preached several times that day to large congregations, and before he slept had "settled" two classes, one for women and the other for men. Other dwellings were opened for preaching—William Moore's, at the northeast corner of Water and South Streets, and Widow Triplett's, on Baltimore Street. The interest spread so rapidly that the meetings had to be transferred to a rigging loft. Before the end of the year Asbury, assisted by Jesse Hollingsworth, George Wells, Richard Moale, George Robinson, and John Woodward, purchased a plot of ground at Fell's Point and began to build the Strawberry Alley Chapel, a brick structure forty-one by thirty feet, with a gallery for colored worshipers. A sounding board was suspended over the pulpit, as if to extinguish the preacher, and a motto, "Thou God seest me," in gilt letters on a blue field,

was the sole mural decoration. Before this preachinghouse was ready a second, that in Lovely Lane, was begun and completed.

Asbury arranged a circuit of two hundred miles and twenty-four appointments, all centering in Baltimore. He traveled it with several efficient local helpers. In March he held its quarterly meeting at "Susquehanna." Multitudes attended. The love feast was thronged, and the sermon and exhorta-



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

LOVELY LANE PREACHINGHOUSE, BALTIMORE.

The first house built and occupied for Methodist preaching in Baltimore.

tions struck many to the heart. "We all went in the strength of the Lord to our several appointments," wrote Asbury at its close.

In the winter of 1771-1772 Webb, tired of having only young preachers sent out to the colonies, went to England to lay the case before Wesley, and to obtain, if not his personal presence in America, at least some man of long experience and recognized position. Pilmoor and Boardman, notwithstanding their unstinted devotion and fruitful labors, had

been much spoken against to Wesley, and Asbury's rigid administration of discipline had provoked bitter opposition. The worthy captain thought nothing was too good for his own people, and asked for Christopher Hopper and Joseph Benson, two of the ablest men in the connection. Though he failed to secure their appointment, he was introduced to the Conference at Leeds, in August, 1772, and was allowed to tell the brethren in his characteristic fashion, all fire and all tears, of the thousands of precious souls perishing in America for lack of knowledge. To George Shadford and Thomas Rankin his impassioned words sounded as a call from above, and, following the example of Boardman and Pilmoor in 1769, and Asbury and Wright in 1771, they offered themselves for the work and were accepted. Like their predecessors, also, they lost no time in preparations for their departure. "The King's business required haste."

Thomas Rankin was a Scot, canny, strong, studious. His boyhood was passed among Calvinists, and, until Whitefield's eloquence filled him with wonder and surprise, he had thought little of the plan of salvation as unfolded by the untutored Methodist itinerants whom he had heard. He had to wrestle manfully for the peace of soul which he ultimately won, for his Calvinistic training suggested to him the possibility that he might be elected to be lost. But after an agony of prayer he came into a full sense of forgiveness. Thenceforth he threw in his lot with the Methodists, was soon drafted into the active work, and had been nearly a dozen years gaining strength as an evangelist and organizer when the American door opened and he found himself a missionary—by Wesley's appointment the head of the work in the New World.

Shadford, the junior preacher, has left a fragrant memory

Captain Webb on a Missionary Excursion.

Drawn by J. Carter Beard.



in Methodism. He was a Lincolnshire man of some thirty-five years, “an ardent, active, happy worker,” who had come into the light out of great darkness, and was one of the most simple-hearted and winning of the early evangelists. To



FROM THE COPPERPLATE BY RITCHIE.

REV. THOMAS RANKIN.

Presiding officer of the first Methodist Conference in America.

him in April, 1773, Wesley wrote the following letter, which deserves insertion in full as a fine example of Wesley's way of addressing his preachers:

“ DEAR GEORGE: The time is arrived for you to embark for America. You must go down to Bristol, where you will

meet with Thomas Rankin, Captain Webb and his wife. I let you loose, George, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can.

“ I am, dear George, yours affectionately,

“ JOHN WESLEY ”

The missionary party, accompanied by another volunteer, Joseph Yearbry, arrived in Philadelphia on June 3, 1773. Asbury, who was in the city, resigned to Rankin his temporary authority over the American societies, probably warning the latter at the same time of the irregularities which he had endeavored to remove. The new chief wrote soon afterward: “ If my brethren who first came over [Boardman and Pilmoor] had been more attentive to our discipline, there would have been a more glorious work by this time in many places. Their love feasts and meetings of society were laid open to all their particular friends, so that their number did not increase, and the minds of our best friends were thereby hurt.”

Asbury's comment on Rankin's first sermon, from the text, “ I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it,” was brief and to the point: “ He will not be admired as a preacher, but as a disciplinarian he will fill the place.” It was no secret that they were come to lay the ax at the root of the tree of irregularity. Pilmoor said of Shadford's exhortation, “ He called it True Old Methodism, and seemed to intimate the people had wanted it till now.”

The missionaries found plenty of work to do. Asbury escorted his successor to New York, where a cheering revival rewarded his efforts. The newcomer dealt frankly with the faults which he detected in the society, and expressed his “ surprise at the extravagance of dress, in par-

ticular among the women." Shadford, meanwhile, was preaching at Trenton and other towns in New Jersey. Abraham Whitworth, an English preacher, had been rousing South Jersey with his eloquence, and in touching the

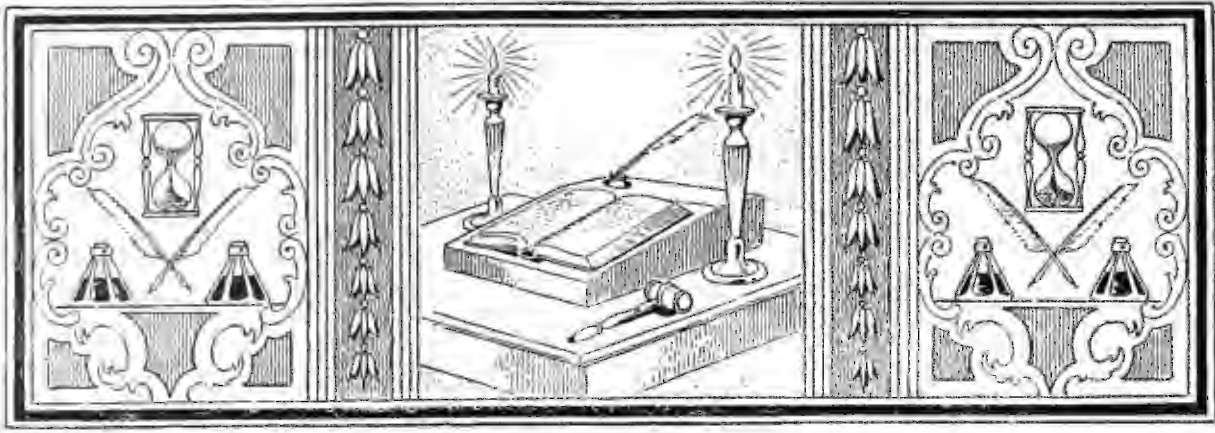


FROM THE ENGRAVING BY RIDLEY IN THE
METHODIST MAGAZINE.

REV. GEORGE SHADFORD.

One of the most devoted of the Wesleyan Missionaries to America.

great heart of Benjamin Abbott had opened the way for the conversion of hundreds more. Six weeks after Rankin's arrival in America he brought the preachers together at Philadelphia in a Conference upon the Wesleyan plan, to hear Wesley's instructions and to adopt rules for a uniform government.



CHAPTER IX

The First Conference in America

METHODIST CONFERENCES.—QUARTERLY MEETINGS.—THE CONFERENCE OF 1773.—PERSONNEL.—THE ABSENTEES.—SPIRIT.—WORK.—THE FIRST METHODIST BOOK AGENT IN AMERICA.—REGULATING THE PUBLICATIONS.

THE “Conference” has been a characteristic feature of Methodism since the last week of June, 1744, when the Wesleys and their fellow clerical and lay preachers—ten in all—met in that old London gunshop, called the Foundry Chapel, to discuss their campaign for spreading scriptural holiness over the land. Then and there began that powerful connectional feeling which pervades all members of the Wesleyan fold and which has carried many enterprises to success. From these annual meetings of the preachers has issued that feeling of fellowship and manly sympathy which has welded the Methodist clergy everywhere into an indissoluble brotherhood.

For the first half dozen years after the lay evangelists began to raise their voices in behalf of spiritual religion throughout the American colonies there seems to have been no attempt to secure a general gathering of the preachers. The workers were few in number, their fields of labor widely separated, and means of communication difficult. Yet the scattered so-

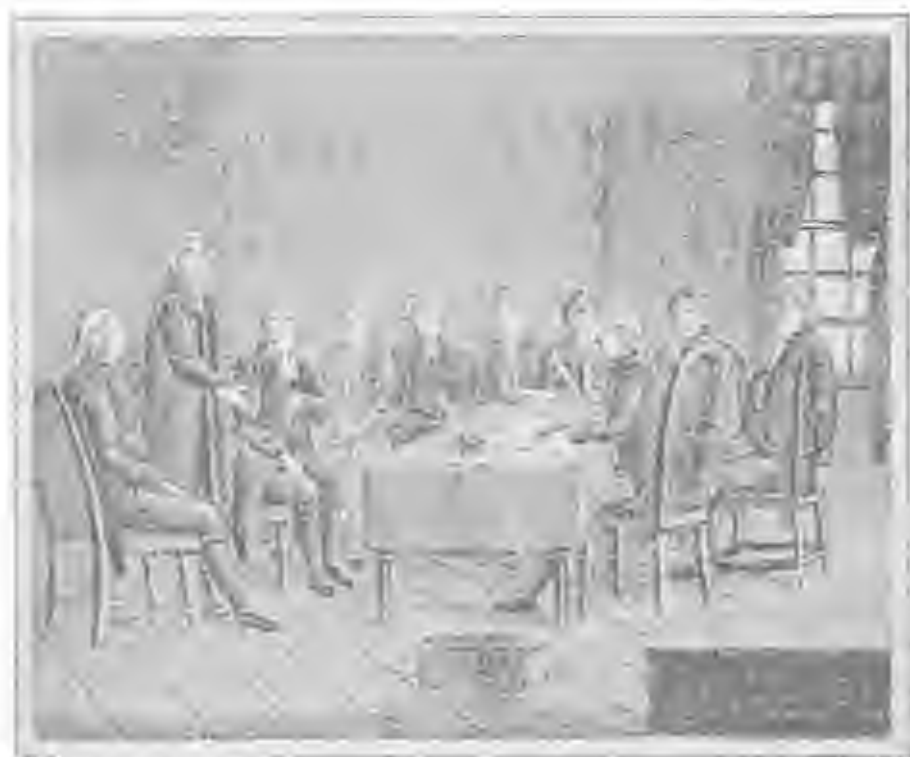
cieties acknowledged their common origin and, when the time came, eagerly accepted the authority which Wesley asserted over them. The earliest preachers were sure of hospitable entertainment wherever Methodist societies had been formed, and, feeble as they were, one society had been known to contribute to the building fund of another in a distant city.

The institution of the quarterly meeting was one of the earliest manifestations of the connectional feeling among the American Methodists. On these occasions the leading members from a number of neighboring societies would assemble, often with their families, for religious services which lasted several days, and at which sermons were delivered by the circuit and local preachers, now and then by some visiting preacher or friendly clergyman. At some of these Quarterly Conferences, as Atkinson shows, the general assistant was present, and preachers were stationed on the neighboring circuits.

Thomas Rankin, Wesley's personal representative, who came over in June, 1773, called together the first Conference of the Methodist preachers in America. The date appointed was Tuesday, July 13, 1773, and the place was Philadelphia, but Asbury and another preacher having been detained, the assembly adjourned to Wednesday. It was not until the day following, the second of the session, that Francis Asbury arrived at that first of the long series of Conferences in which, until his death, he was to be the controlling mind. Few could have prophesied at the time the magnitude of his administrative career or the splendor of his strategic genius. He was only in his twenty-eighth year, and had been hardly two years in America. His zeal for the cause, however, was already apparent, but his steady insistence upon the vigorous enforcement of the rules had somewhat strained his relations

with some of the older preachers. Perhaps even then those qualities were developing of which his good friend Jarratt, the Virginia clergyman, spoke somewhat tartly a few years later (1780) as "his strong passion for superiority and thirst for domination."

Thomas Rankin presided, by virtue of his commission from Wesley, as "general assistant," or "superintendent" of the



FROM AN OLD PRINT.

THE FIRST CONFERENCE IN AMERICA, 1773.

American societies. Numerous complaints had reached Wesley at City Road concerning the disturbed condition of the work in the New World and because of the failure of his missionaries to enforce the discipline; and he designated Rankin, one of his most trusted helpers, to set matters right. He was a stranger to the country and its conditions, and was probably but slightly acquainted with the men whose operations he must direct.

It will help us to understand the suspicion under which the

Methodists rested in the early years of the Revolutionary War if we consider that every member of this pioneer gathering of their preachers was of alien birth. They were, in fact, foreign missionaries among us. We can scarcely wonder that their presence in Philadelphia passed unnoticed in the public prints. There was not an ordained minister among them. Not even Rankin himself had authority to administer the sacraments. They were simply ten lay evangelists, poor in purse, not learned in the university, not seeking the applause of men, anxious only to spread the power of godliness in a land of spiritual dearth. Conspicuous in the Conference was Captain Webb, the half-pay veteran who had recently come from England with recruits for the cause which lay next his heart. Richard Boardman and the eloquent Pilmoor, Wesley's first accredited missionaries, were present, both smarting from the criticisms which had been passed upon the work in the cities. Pilmoor had just returned from a year of faithful itinerant labor which had taken him as far south as Charleston and Savannah. Shadford and Yearbry, who had come over with Rankin, watched the deliberations of their new colleagues with profound concern. It is probable that Richard Wright, Asbury's fellow-voyager in 1771, and Abraham Whitworth, whose eloquence had lately winged the Gospel to the heart of that rough apostle, Benjamin Abbott, made up the number. The tenth, if indeed there were ten, for no roll of attendance has been preserved, was either John King, whose first sermon had been preached in the Potter's Field in Philadelphia in 1770, or, less probably, Robert Strawbridge, the Maryland pioneer.

The most notable absentees were the enterprising colporteur, Robert Williams, and his companion, William Watters, then the only native American itinerant. These two evan-

gelists were too busy circulating tracts and preaching the word in Virginia to spare a month's time to go the long distance to Philadelphia.

The building where the session was held was St. George's, which had been bought for the society in Philadelphia in 1769, through the efforts of Pilmoor and others. From the pages of Pilmoor's Journal we obtain some knowledge of the spirit which dominated the Conference. On Tuesday, July 13, he writes: "Several of us met at our church at six in the morning. As two of the preachers had not arrived we agreed to adjourn until the next day. At seven in the evening Mr. Boardman preached a most excellent sermon on the important work of the Christian ministry. Wednesday morning we met and entered upon our business in the fear of the most high God. As Mr. Boardman and I had been shamefully misrepresented to Mr. Wesley, and Mr. Rankin sent over to take the whole management upon himself, it was expected we would have pretty close work. Had we given place to nature, and followed our own temporal interest, it would probably have been so. But we considered, and preferred the interests of religion and the honor of God above all the riches and honors the world can bestow, and were determined to submit to anything consistent with a good conscience rather than injure the work of the Lord. In this spirit we were kept during the Conference. We consulted together under the tender visitations of the Almighty, and were favored with the presence and blessing of God. So the enemy of souls was disappointed and all our matters were settled in peace."

To Asbury's clearer vision all things were not so peaceful. "I did not find such harmony as I could wish for," he says. "There were some debates among the preachers in this Con-

ference relative to the conduct of some who had manifested a desire to abide in cities and live like gentlemen. It was also found that money had been wasted, improper leaders appointed, and many of our Rules broken."

It would be strange indeed if one so devoted to order as Asbury had not lost patience over the irregularities which had crept into the societies during these formative years. The laborers were few, and too intent on their chief end, the proclamation of the Gospel, to give close attention to discipline. Asbury's complaint in regard to the excessive importance attached to the work in the cities doubtless grew out of his irrepressible energy, which burned to see the continent covered with preaching stations. Yet it must not be forgotten that the city stations were strategic points, and Boardman's labors for the society in New York and Pilmoor's far-sighted leadership in Philadelphia must not be underestimated. What with the John Street Chapel to be paid for, and a heavy debt on the bare shell of St. George's, it would have been reckless policy for the first Wesleyan preachers to plunge into the woods without a safe base of operations.

The reports from the scattered societies presented a total membership of 1,160. Maryland led off with 500, New Jersey returned 200, New York and Philadelphia, 180 each, and Virginia, 100; the round numbers suggesting that the figures represent estimates rather than an accurate copy of the class rolls.

The Minutes set forth decisions of the Conference in the form of question and answer, after the Socratic manner which had always existed in the Conference in England. Here they are, with a brevity quite tantalizing:

1. Ought not the authority of Mr. Wesley and that Conference to extend to the preachers and people in America as well as in Great Britain and Ireland? Yes.

2. Ought not the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists, as contained in the Minutes, to be the sole rule of our conduct who labor, in the connection with Mr. Wesley, in America? Yes.

3. If so, does it not follow that if any preachers deviate from the Minutes, we

can have no fellowship with them till they change their conduct? Yes.



M I N U T E S

OF SOME

C O N V E R S A T I O N S

BETWEEN THE

P R E A C H E R S

IN CONNECTION WITH

The Rev. Mr. John Wesley.

P H I L A D E L P H I A,

June, 1773.



THE following queries were proposed to every preacher:

1. Ought not the authority of Mr. Wesley and that conference, to extend to the preachers and people in America, as well as in Great-Britain and Ireland?

Ans. Yes.

2. Ought not the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists, as contained in the minutes, to be the sole rule of our conduct who labour, in the connection with Mr. Wesley, in America?

Ans. Yes.

3. If so, does it not follow, that if any preachers deviate from the minutes, we can have no fellowship with them till they change their conduct?

Ans. Yes.

The following rules were agreed to by all the preachers present:

1. Every preacher who acts in connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labour in Ameri-

FACSIMILE OF THE PRINTED MINUTES, 1773. (A)

The rules, six in number, dealt chiefly with two subjects—the relation of the Methodists to the Church and the circula-

These enactments established formally the connection of the American societies with their English brethren, acknowledged the authority of the British Conference, and bound the American preachers to conform to the Wesleyan practices as printed in the Minutes. The fact that "all the preachers present agreed" to the rules which were adopted may be accepted as proof that the determined Maryland pioneer was not present at this Conference.

tion of Methodist books. The finger of John Wesley, minister of the Church of England, is plainly visible in both these fundamental rules:

1. Every preacher who acts in connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labor in America is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

2. All the people among whom we labor to be earnestly exhorted to attend the church, and to receive the ordinances there; but in a particular manner to press the people in Maryland and Virginia to the observance of this minute.

The men who made these rules were themselves lay members of the Church of England, of which Wesley was an ordained presbyter. It was his desire, and theirs at the outset, that Methodism should be nothing more than a society of the truly pious existing within the pale of the Church.

His traveling and local preachers were simply lay evangelists,

ca, is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper.

2. All the people among whom we labour to be earnestly exhorted to attend the church, and to receive the ordinances there; but in a particular manner to press the people in Maryland and Virginia, to the observance of this minute.

3. No person or persons to be admitted to our love-feasts oftener than twice or thrice, unless they become members; and none to be admitted to the society meetings more than thrice.

4. None of the preachers in America to reprint any of Mr. Wesley's books, without his authority (when it can be got) and the consent of their brethren.

5. Robert Williams to sell the books he has already printed, but to print no more, unless under the above restriction.

6. Every preacher who acts as an assistant, to send an account of the work once in six months to the general assistant.

Quest. 1. How are the preachers stationed?

<i>Ans.</i> New-York,	Thomas Rankin,	} to change in 4 mons.
Philadelphia,	George Shadford,	
New-Jersey,	John King,	}
	William Waters,	
Baltimore,	Francis Asbury,	
	Robert Strawbridge,	
	Abraham Whitworth,	}
	Joseph Yerbery,	
Norfolk,	Richard Wright,	
Petersburg,	Robert Williams.	

Quest. 2. What number are there in the society?

<i>Ans.</i> New-York	-	180
Philadelphia	-	180
New-Jersey	-	200
Maryland	- -	500
Virginia	-	100
		<hr/> 1160 <hr/>

FACSIMILE OF THE PRINTED MINUTES. 1773. (B)

and these rules for America only expressed the burden of his urgent exhortation to the Methodists at home to honor the Church and its services, and to receive baptism and the Lord's Supper only at the hands of its regularly ordained clergy. In England the Established Church was everywhere accessible, but in America the case was far different. The Reformed Churches, the Presbyterians, and even the Baptists, were numerous in New York and New Jersey; Philadelphia itself was a city of Quakers, while in Maryland and Virginia, where the Church of England prevailed, its ministers were, as a class, characterized by worldliness and neglect of the spiritual things which the Methodists held most dear.

The question of the right of the American preachers to administer the sacrament came up repeatedly in the following years, and brought the connection to the verge of disunion. But it was finally settled in 1784, when the societies declared themselves a Church and their preachers assumed all the rights and powers of ministers.

It is interesting to hear from Asbury that Strawbridge was by name excepted from this prohibition, an irregularity which must have galled the man of discipline. Doubtless the brethren thus made merit of necessity; for it is well known that the sturdy Irish farmer set his own value on ordinations, and considered himself not unworthy to baptize the converts whom the Lord had given to him.

The third rule was intended to correct the loose practice of some preachers of admitting merely curious persons to the Methodist exercises. Preaching was free to all, but the cultivation of spiritual life could be best attained by the select body of earnest seekers after truth. The third rule provided that no person or persons should be admitted to the love feasts oftener than twice or thrice, unless they should become

members, and none might be admitted to the society meetings more than thrice.

The fourth and fifth rules bring us to a subject of highest importance. John Wesley was among the first to recognize the availability of cheap printing as a means of disseminating his ideas. For many years he had been issuing religious books—hymnals, magazines, tracts, sermons, and journals—in rapid succession, and the results had amply proved the wisdom and usefulness of the undertaking. With that sound common sense which was his dominating characteristic he had kept his own controlling hand upon this increasing business until, at his death, it should be turned over to the Conference, to yield a revenue for many beneficent works. The plain lesson from his experience was that the Methodist publishing arrangements in America should be unified and made subject to similar control. He had already made donations of books to the society in New York, his brother's hymns had been sung from the Chesapeake to the Hudson, and at least one of the itinerants had begun to reprint and scatter broadcast in Virginia the sermons and tracts which had been the seed of the Great Revival in the old country.

This first American Methodist Book Agent, chosen by no General Conference and answerable to no Book Committee, was Robert Williams. Of his own motion, and with what capital it is difficult to imagine, he had printed a number of pamphlets containing Wesley's sermons and other Methodist writings. These he carried with him on his rounds. Philip Gatch tasted one of them to his soul's health in 1772, and the Rev. Devereux Jarratt, the Virginia Churchman, learned the principles of Methodism from the same source. Commendable as was Williams's publishing activity, those who know the magnitude of the Methodist Book Concern of the next

century in all its strength and usefulness will not find fault with the sagacity of the fathers in enacting these rules for the unification of our publishing interests:

4. None of the preachers in America to reprint any of Mr. Wesley's books, without his authority (when it can be got) and the consent of their brethren.

5. Robert Williams to sell the books he has already printed, but to print no more, unless under the above restrictions.

The sixth and last rule carried still further the idea of connectional unity and marked the introduction of the system of supervision and reports which has contributed so much to the efficiency of the organization:

6. Every preacher who acts as an assistant to send an account of the work once in six months to the general assistant.

The last item of business was the reading of the appointments:

New York—Thomas Rankin.

Philadelphia—George Shadford.

(These to change in four months.)

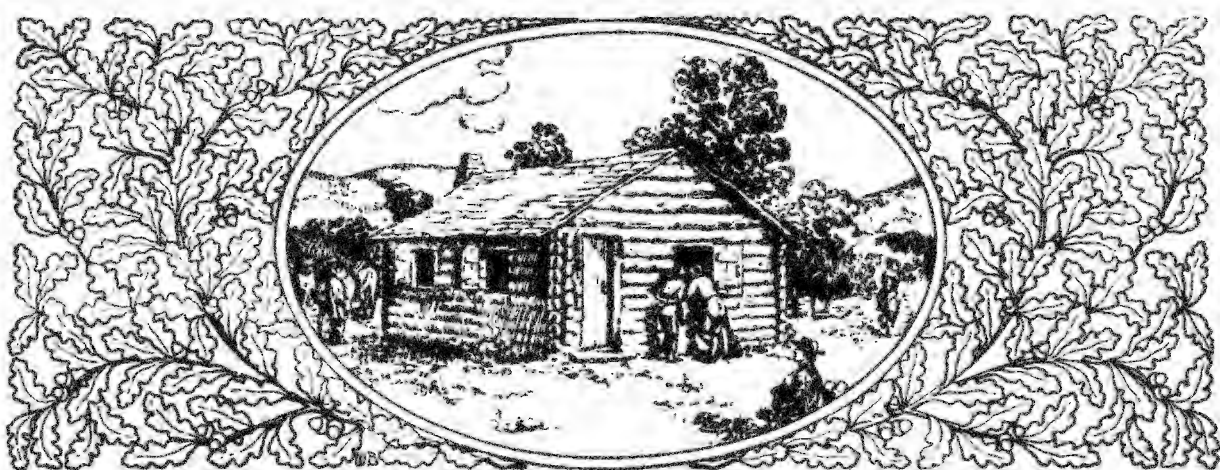
New Jersey—John King, William Watters.

Baltimore—Francis Asbury, Robert Strawbridge, Abraham Whitworth, Joseph Yearbry.

Norfolk—Richard Wright.

Petersburg—Robert Williams.

Thus is the whole Atlantic coast divided among a few itinerant preachers. They had scanty funds, but intense energy and high hopes. Compare the few names and brief records of the Minutes of the Conference of 1773, printed on a few duodecimo leaves, with the voluminous General Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and other branches of American Methodism, with their octavo volumes of more than a thousand pages packed with the statistics of two hundred Annual Conferences and the appointments of nearly forty thousand preachers.



CHAPTER X

The Parting of the Ways

RETURN OF BOARDMAN AND PILMOOR TO ENGLAND.—THEIR SUBSEQUENT CAREER.—ATKINSON'S VALUABLE SERVICE.—METHODIST HISTORY.—PILMOOR'S VINDICATION.—THE UNITY OF THE BRETHREN.

THE earliest pair of Wesleyan missionaries, Boardman and Pilmoor, received no appointments, though both were present at the Conference of 1773. We have no statement of the reasons for this omission, though we know that their work had been adversely criticised by Asbury, complaints had been sent to Mr. Wesley, and Rankin had given ear to the charge that they had been lax in the application of the Rules.

The enactment of the Conference restricting the attendance upon love feasts to members of society was evidently aimed at them. Nothing was said, or indeed could be, against their faithful preaching, their self-denying devotion, and their loving ministry.

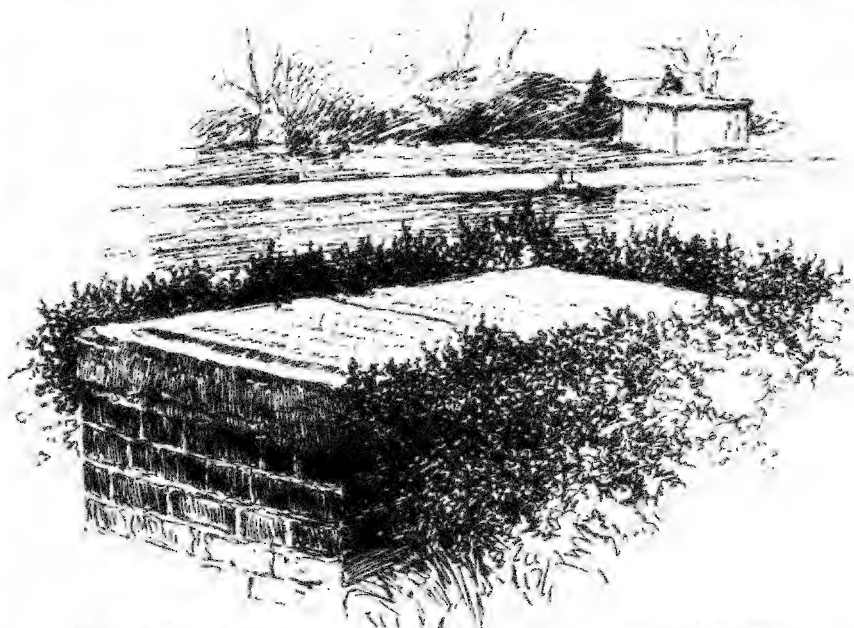
The two friends remained in America but six months longer, preaching and helping the other preachers in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, seemingly still in full fellowship with the American Methodists. They had decided to return to England, and Boardman was anxious to

be off. On the last Sabbath of 1773 Pilmoor preached his farewell sermon in Philadelphia, the day closing with a never-to-be-forgotten "love feast." "My heart," says the faithful missionary, "was so affected by the thought of leaving a people who are dear to me as life itself, that I was almost overwhelmed with sorrow. I should certainly have yielded to the entreaties of my friends to continue in America, only I was determined not to desert Mr Boardman, though it should cost me my life. God gave me such comfort in him that in the evening I preached my farewell sermon to a vast multitude of weeping citizens with much more firmness than I expected." Still preaching where he could find hearers, he crossed New Jersey by wagon and sleigh. The first Sunday of the new year, January 2, 1774, found him again in the pulpit of Wesley Chapel, "with feelings too big for expression." A few days later Boardman and he set sail for Bristol, deeply regretted by hundreds of their spiritual children.

"Blessed be God," exclaims Pilmoor, "who has kept us by his gracious power, so that we have not done anything to hinder our usefulness in this country, or make the people wish to have us removed!" And again, "The people are as eager to hear Mr. Boardman and me as they were the first day we arrived."

On their return to England Boardman at once took a Conference appointment and continued in the itinerant service, chiefly on Irish circuits, until 1782, when he died suddenly in the midst of his usefulness. "On Friday morning, October 4, 1782," says a contemporary, "he was observed to pray with an uncommon degree of power" and at nine o'clock in the evening "he expired in the arms of two of his brethren." "Kind, loving, childlike," were the attributes with which his friends

described his character. Pilmoor did not resume his Conference connection for several years, though "preaching frequently five times a week." In 1776, however, he was appointed to London, and continued to be sent to the most important circuits until 1785, when his name was dropped from the roll. His self-esteem was wounded by his exclusion from the "Legal Hundred" of preachers—the corporation to which John Wesley deeded the vast property and authority which he had accumulated as the founder of Methodism—and he withdrew from the connection forever. Samuel Seabury, the Connecticut minister who had just been consecrated to the episcopacy



DRAWN BY WARREN B. DAVIS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

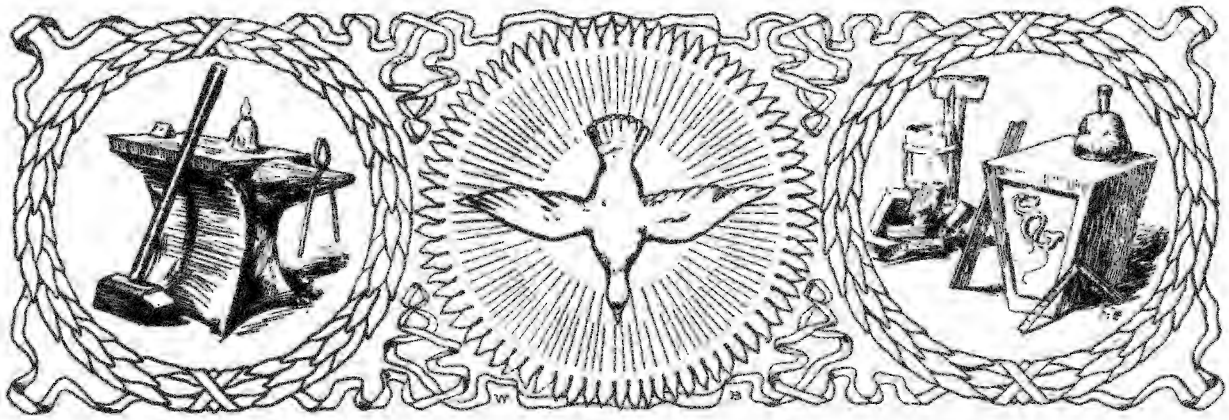
THE TOMB OF REV RICHARD BOARDMAN, AT CORK.

by the Scottish bishops, ordained him, and he devoted the remainder of his long and useful career to the regular ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America. His new associations did not cool his evangelical ardor or destroy his friendly regard for the Methodist people. As late as 1807 he exhibited his Christian liberality by writing: "The Methodists bid fair to outnumber most of their neighbors. This is indeed the Lord's doing; showing that life and zeal in religion are worth more than all the arts and sciences together." He served parishes in New York and Philadelphia, where he died in 1825.

Among his fellows Pilmoor stands out as a man of thorough scholarship, persuasive eloquence, and a deeply spiritual nature. He could read his Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek, but he did not shrink from preaching the simple Gospel in barracks, jails, and poorhouses. He was the welcome table companion of the rich, but zealously visited from house to house and stopped young men in the street to tell them of his Master. Asbury might accuse him of abiding too much in cities, yet his southern journey (1772-1773) of a thousand miles was the longest and most arduous that any American itinerant had yet undertaken. Atkinson well says of him and the colleague whom he loved so well: "But for their presence here the history of Methodism in this country might have been different from what it is. Well-poised men were they, discreet, cultured, holy, eloquent, lovers of mankind, and aflame with zeal for Christ. Their work was wrought in love and its effects are immortal."

The first American Conference established one thing definitely and finally: the societies which had been planted in the lanes of New York, the hamlets of New Jersey, and the Maryland backwoods, by the carpenters, farmers, and men of business with or without parchments from Mr. Wesley, but invariably under God's high commission, were henceforth to be one body. The bond that held them to Wesley held them together, and from that Friday in July, 1773, when the little company dispersed to go to their respective circuits, Methodism in America has been strongly connectional.

Rankin, the steady, earnest, sober president of the Conference, could say when it was over, and the controversy which had ruffled Asbury had subsided, "We parted in love, and also with a full resolution to spread genuine Methodism in public and private with all our might."



CHAPTER XI

American Volunteers

THE FIRST NATIVE PREACHERS.—A MATTER OF DISPUTE.—EDWARD EVANS AND RICHARD OWEN.—WILLIAM WATTERS'S EXPERIENCE.—"CALLED OUT" BY WILLIAMS.—PENINSULA METHODISM.

THE first Conference was the last to consist solely of foreign-born preachers. The seed which these missionaries were scattering broadcast came rapidly to fruit, and the harvest was prompt and full. Sons of Maryland and Virginia planters with youths from the farms and towns of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys met the plain-spoken itinerants in their own homes and on the highways, heard them preach in barns and courthouses or under the forest trees, and were touched to the heart by their hymns and prayers and burning words. Many a young man whose life had been illuminated and enriched by the first appeal he had heard went forth without other call or commission than the inward impulse to preach the Gospel. The watchful eye of the itinerant detected in some of these eager youths qualities of the highest usefulness, and one by one they were summoned to leave kindred and friends and enter the traveling ministry—at first, as a rule, as the companion of a veteran laborer, and later as regular members of Conference. Among

the enthusiastic spirits who were thus brought into the work were plowboys in homespun, and rough and unlettered boatmen, while beside them, on equal footing, stood sons of good colonial families who tore themselves away from loving friends and comfortable homes to undergo the hardships and dangers of the itinerant evangelist.

The first native American preacher of Methodism, according to Atkinson, was Edward Evans, of Philadelphia, of whom Pilmoor's Journal tells us the little that we know. He was a trophy of Whitefield's revival work, and had stood fast in the faith for nearly thirty years when Pilmoor met him in the Quaker city a few days after his arrival from England in 1769. He attached himself at once to the Methodist society, and was one of the trustees named in the deed of the new church building. Though advanced in years, he preached in the city and in neighboring towns as early as 1770. In the autumn of the following year he died. For some months previously he had been the minister of the congregation of "Greenwich Chapel," located near the present village of Clarksboro, N J. This chapel had been built for him by the people, who "were exceedingly fond of him," and here on the 14th of October, 1771, the good missionary preached the funeral sermon of his "ever dear and venerable friend."

Before Atkinson advanced the claims of Edward Evans to the distinction of being "the first American Methodist preacher" this honor was generally conceded to Richard Owen, or Owings, of Baltimore County, Md., one of Strawbridge's early converts. He is described as "a man of respectable family, of good natural parts and of considerable utterance, plain in his dress, plain in his manners, industrious and frugal." Owen was ardently devoted to his spiritual father, assisted him in his work as an evangelist as long

as he lived, and at his death he preached the funeral sermon. After many years of active service in the local ranks, although he frequently left his family to go on extensive preaching tours, Owen was in 1785 admitted to the traveling connection. He died in 1787 at Leesburg, Va.

Whatever may be said for the priority of Evans's brief and obscure itinerant service and of Owen's zealous labors as a



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE DALLAM HOMESTEAD, HARFORD COUNTY, MD.

A Methodist dwelling frequented by Strawbridge, Pilmoor, Asbury, Coke, and other early preachers.

local preacher, William Watters and Philip Gatch will still be known as the first native Americans who regularly entered the traveling ministry as members of Conference and, as one of them put it, "went out among the Methodists to preach the Gospel."

Watters was a Marylander, born near Baltimore in 1751, and carefully reared in a Church of England household. The advent of the Methodist preachers to his vicinity in 1770, just

as he was approaching manhood, recalled his mind from the worldly pursuits of his associates to the solemn responsibilities of life. He was convicted of sin and in May, 1771, a number of godly people went to his father's house to pray for him. As they sang with the spirit and in faith,

Give to the winds thy fears,

he tells us: "My face was turned to the wall, with my eyes lifted upward in a flood of tears, and I felt a lively hope that the Lord whom I sought would suddenly come to his temple. The Lord heard and appeared in the midst of us. A divine light beamed through my inmost soul, and in a few minutes encircled me round, surpassing the brightness of the sun. My burden was gone, my sorrow fled, my soul and all that was within me rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God, while I beheld such a fullness and willingness in the Lord Jesus to save lost sinners, and my soul so rested on him, that I could now for the first time call Jesus Christ Lord by the Holy Ghost. The hymn being concluded, we all fell upon our knees, but my prayers were turned into praises. A supernatural power penetrated every faculty of my soul and body."

The parish clergyman was not only unspiritual, but openly immoral, and young Watters must of necessity turn to the little band of Methodists for fellowship. He counted it a princely honor to be received among them. There were only a few Wesleyan itinerants in America in those days, but, as Watters says, "we were all preachers." The visible change, which sinners could not help seeing, was a means of leading them to seek the Lord. On the Sabbath they commonly divided into little bands and went out into sparse neighborhoods, wherever there was a door open to receive them, and would sing, read, pray, and talk to the people, and some soon

began to add a word of exhortation. They were weak, but lived in a dark day, and the Lord greatly owned their labors.

Doubtless Watters, though quite young, was one of the timid voices that "began to add a word of exhortation." But Robert Williams, in the autumn of 1772, as he rode through the province distributing his Wesleyan tracts and preaching his earnest sermons, saw in this youth the promise of wider usefulness, and called him forth to travel with him into Virginia. The young man's mother and friends protested with tears. "But," he writes, "I found such resignation and so clear a conviction that my way was of the Lord that I was enabled to commit them and myself to the care of our heavenly Father," and so, "being fully persuaded of my call to the ministry, and that it was my duty to go wherever a kind Providence should point out the way, I cheerfully accepted the invitation of that pious servant of the Lord, Robert Williams, and set out with him and under his care in October, 1772, for Norfolk, in Virginia; being just twenty-one years of age, having known the Lord seventeen months, and been exhorting about five or six."

Watters and his companion traveled slowly to their destination, preaching in the towns, and seizing every opportunity to "introduce religious conversation as we rode or sat at the fireside in taverns and in private houses. We found very few in the course of three hundred miles who knew experimentally anything of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Pilmoor had slightly preceded the two evangelists at Norfolk, and had planted a society there, but Watters continued to travel and preach in southeastern Virginia until after the Conference of 1773 had met at Philadelphia. His appointment was to the New Jersey Circuit as the junior preacher with John King. He was unable to go to this field, however, and after a brief rest at his old home he was sent to

Kent, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, then the only circuit between the Chesapeake and the Delaware. The membership was doubled as the result of his efforts, but it has doubled so many times since then that "the Peninsula" has long been



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH.

BUSH FOREST CHAPEL, MARYLAND.

The original building, erected of logs in 1768, is said to have been the second or third in America.

famous for the numbers and sterling quality of its Methodist population.

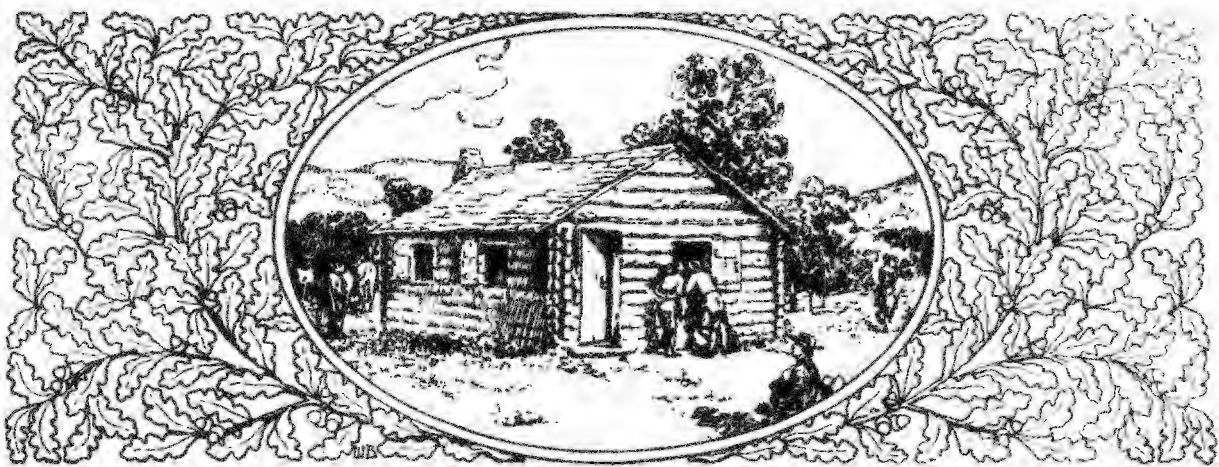
The first society in Kent County was gathered in 1773, and the "Kent Meeting House," afterward known as Hinson's Chapel, was built in the following year, in spite of an opposition which manifested itself in a scandalous attempt to burn it down.

Even after God had owned Mr. Watters's labors by many infallible signs the young itinerant was troubled by misgivings concerning his religious condition. At the close of a busy and successful winter on the Eastern Shore he crossed the bay to Baltimore, preaching in the vicinity until the Conference met. At this time he wrote, "Though sin did not reign in me, yet it remained, and marred my happiness."

For this reason he “mourned, wept, fasted, prayed, and truly longed to be sanctified throughout soul, body, and spirit.”

After ten years of faithful itinerant service Watters located in 1783 and settled upon his farm near Langley, Va. Twice he reentered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church for brief periods, and after his final retirement, in 1806, he frequently preached in Alexandria, Georgetown, and Washington, and it has been said with truth that “no man was more acceptable in the pulpit than he, or could command at all times larger congregations.” In his later years his appearance and manner were remarkably impressive and venerable. A notable trait was the exceeding seriousness that grew upon him, so that one who had been his pastor “never heard him laugh and seldom saw him smile.” Watters himself said, “Let others plead the innocence or usefulness of levity, I cannot; though God knows I am too often betrayed into it, but never without feeling that it more or less unfits me for that deep recollection and that constant communication with the Lord which nothing should for a moment interrupt.”

According to the record in the old family Bible the Rev William Watters died at Langley, Va., October 29, 1827. Many of his successors have been more eloquent, have remained longer in the service, have accomplished greater things for Christ and the Church, but universal Methodism will long cherish the name of the first native American itinerant who was formally associated with the British missionaries in proclaiming “Christianity in earnest” on this western hemisphere.



CHAPTER XII

An American Philip

GATCH, THE COMPANION AND SUCCESSOR OF WATTERS.—LABORS IN NEW JERSEY, DELAWARE, AND MARYLAND.—KAIN'S DISCOMFITURE.—MCLEAN'S TRIBUTE.

WHEN Watters failed to take his work in New Jersey, in 1773, Rankin, the general assistant, supplied his place with another young Maryland exhorter to whom had come the unmistakable call to preach. This was Philip Gatch, of Georgetown, the present District of Columbia. He was just of Watters's age, and his heart also had rejected the stones which the worldly parish clergy dealt out to a people hungering for the bread of life. The doctrines and practice of the Friends suited him better, but the full refreshment did not come until Nathan Perigo, one of Strawbridge's converts, passed up through the province inviting sinners to the Gospel feast. "He possessed great zeal," wrote Gatch long after, describing this first Methodist meeting he ever attended, "and was strong in the faith of the Gospel. I was near him when he opened the exercises. His prayer alarmed me much; I never had witnessed such energy nor heard such expressions in prayer before. I was afraid that God would send some judgment upon the congre-

gation for my being at such a place." His prayer of faith and plain presentation of salvation from sin through the sacrifice of Christ made full conquest of the serious young hearer. The word was with power. "I was the first person known to 'shout' in that part of the country," he afterward wrote. To his brother, who was blessed with a similar experience, he made no secret of his conversion. They instituted family prayers in the paternal mansion, and even welcomed the traveling preachers to hold meetings there. One of the Wesleyan tracts which Robert Williams was scattering through the settlements fell into Philip's hands. It was Wesley's sermon on Salvation by Faith, the keynote of the Great Revival, and it confirmed his belief and fortified his faith. Before the end of the year 1772 he was telling his experience to little companies of his friends and acquaintances and exhorting them to flee from the wrath to come and lead a new life. Here Rankin found him, as Williams had discovered Watters a few months before, and set before him the whiteness of the fields and the dearth of laborers, concluding by a direct summons to him to go to New Jersey as a traveling preacher.

"It was like breaking asunder the tender cords of life, a kind of death to me," the young man wrote of the parting from family and friends. "But I dared not look back. He that will be Christ's disciple must forsake all and follow him."

As he went forward to take up his arduous work, Asbury, then lying ill, called him to his bedside to give him wise counsel. Sympathy, too, there doubtless was, from the heart of that man of iron, who ever bore in fresh recollection the memory of the weeping mother whom he had left in the old Staffordshire home. Pilmoor, perhaps the most cultivated man among the preachers, was in Philadelphia when Gatch came up from Maryland. "My heart rejoices," he noted in

his Journal, "that the Lord is raising up laborers and thrusting them out to proclaim salvation in the deserts." John King, the young exhorter's senior colleague, crossed the



GATCH'S CHURCH, BALTIMORE. BUILT 1814.

Named from Rev. Philip Gatch, who lived in this locality. Seven generations of his kindred lie in the burying ground near by.

Delaware with him, preached, and held a love feast, and then left the stripling with all New Jersey for his field of labor.

Supported only by his faith in God and in his mission, young Gatch addressed himself boldly to his task, and though the Methodist name "was very much spoken against" he made at least a beginning. Philip Gatch continued for twenty years to travel circuits in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. He had enjoyed small educational advantages in youth, and his pulpit utterance was not distinguished for argument or profundity of thought, neither had he that

spirited eloquence which bears the hearer away on its rushing tide. He was exceedingly plain of speech and simple of manner, but his language was so clear, his manner so engaging, that his earnest message had great persuasive power upon all who heard. Those who were converted under his gentle ministrations were numbered by thousands.

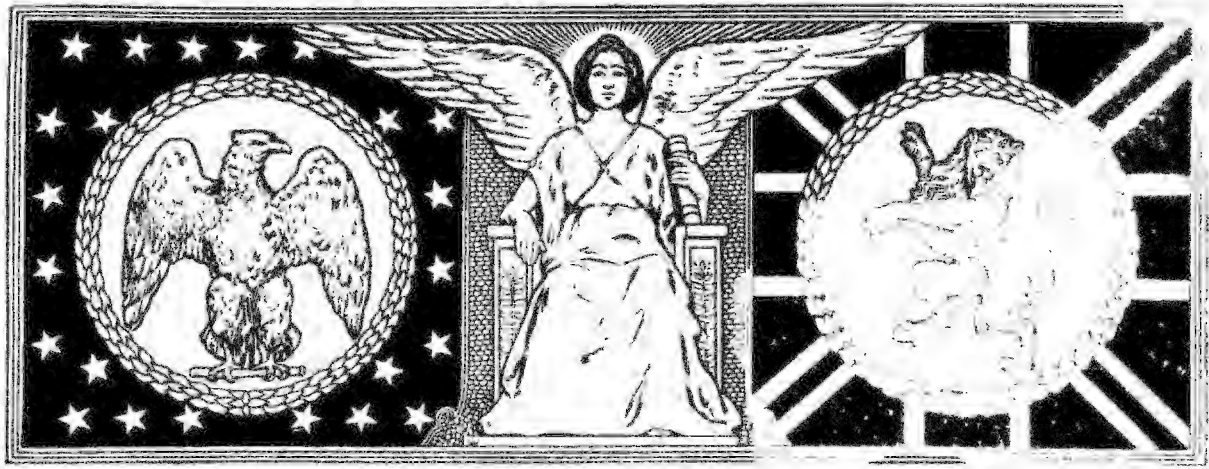
Some premonitions of the rough handling which Methodists were to receive during the war might be had from the experience of Gatch in these years. The young Marylander was selected to replace the fallen Whitworth on the Kent Circuit on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where the cause had suffered severely from his disgrace. There was a loud outcry against the Methodists, and in one place a man would have felled Gatch with a chair but that the latter, on his knees, caught and warded off the blow. Men in the congregation thrust the offender out of doors, and the incident resulted in bringing more people to hear and know the truth. Parson Kain, a notoriously pugnacious clergyman, often measured quarterstaves with the itinerants on the Eastern Shore. On hearing that Gatch had made an appointment to preach within the bounds of his parish he sallied forth to give him ecclesiastical battle. His intellectual stature loomed up Goliath-like before the imagination of the young preacher, but with the boldness of David he accepted the combat. Having answered the parson's challenge of his authority by referring him to Scripture warrant, he mounted his platform under the trees and gave out his text. He wisely chose it from the Book of Common Prayer, to which he was no stranger. He adroitly introduced so much of good Anglican doctrine into his discourse that the baffled and excited minister could scarcely read the elaborate reply which he had prepared. Kain, however, launched out against the "new birth" and

the use of extemporary prayers. To this Gatch promptly replied that, for his own part, he knew that he had "been born again," and as for the prayers, "when Peter was sinking he did not go ashore to get a prayer book, but cried out, 'Lord, save, or I perish!'" This sally left him master of the field. Brave, simple, devoted, tactful, he soon healed the wound of Whitworth's defection, and when he left the circuit for another two preachers were required to serve the appointments he had established.

While traveling the rural circuits in these early years Gatch was subjected to annoyances which the city preachers were spared. Late one Saturday night, for example, he was waylaid on a Maryland highway. Two men armed with cudgels forced him into a tavern where a band of roysterers had vowed to make the Methodist preacher drunk. He resolutely refused to taste their liquor, and while they quarreled among themselves he escaped out of their hands.

In middle life Gatch removed to a pioneer settlement "on the western waters," a few miles east of the village out of which the great city of Cincinnati has developed. Though no longer a traveling preacher, he was ever ready to lend a hand to the Methodist cause. He lived to an advanced age, and died on December 28, 1835, "expressing an unshaken confidence in God." The late Justice McLean, of the Supreme Court of the United States, knew him long and loved him well. His sketch of the life of Philip Gatch is a beautiful tribute by one of the world's great men to one whom the world held in little estimation. It closes with these impressive sentences: "In matter and manner Mr. Gatch was one of a class of preachers who laid the foundation of Methodism in America. They were not learned, in their own estimation or in the estimation of the world. They were educated in the

school of Christ, but beyond this their qualifications scarcely surpassed those of the fishermen and publicans who first preached the Gospel in Judea. They wore the Christian armor and were deeply imbued with the Christian spirit. They were despised and condemned for their presumption and ignorance. Perhaps not one of them could form a syllogism nor argue within the most approved rules of logicians. But they went forth, not in their own strength, but in the strength of Him who often chooses the weak things of the world to confound the things of the mighty. They went forth, and their cry was heard through the land. They preached in the open air, in barns, and wherever the people would come together. They were sensible of their deficiencies, and had no confidence in their own unassisted powers. They did not aim to preach great sermons, but sermons that would reach the heart and reform the life. And God's blessing rested on their labors, and the Church has gratefully embalmed 'their memories.' "



CHAPTER XIII

Under Gathering War Clouds

OPPOSITION TO THE ENGLISH PREACHERS.—GENERAL VIEW, 1773-1776.—
THE CONFERENCES OF 1774 AND 1775.—ASBURY.—HENRY DORSEY
GOUGH.—PERSECUTION.—RECRUITS FROM ABROAD.—AMERICAN VOL-
UNTEERS.—WILLIAMS AND EMBURY.

THE English preachers who set out from Philadelphia at the close of the Conference of 1773, determined to know nothing among the Americans save Christ and him crucified, were beset with unusual difficulties even for Methodist itinerants, who, in those early days, could usually reckon on the bitter opposition of at least two classes in the community—the openly wicked and the official representatives of the Established Churches. The resentment of the colonists against Great Britain for her stepmotherly treatment of her American children had already provoked bloody collisions in New York and Boston, and at every rural meetinghouse and crossroads tavern, as well as in Faneuil Hall and the House of Burgesses, the village Hampdens were denouncing the tyranny of King George.

It is probable that this excited feeling was not the least of the considerations which hastened the decision of Boardman and Pilmoor to turn their backs upon America as early as

1774. As the clouds grew darker, however, the other missionaries found their usefulness so impaired that they, too, chose to retire from their promising field of activity, until only one English preacher, Francis Asbury, a man without a country, save an heavenly, remained to link the Methodism of the revolted colonies with that of Great Britain.

During the three years which followed the first Conference the progress of American Methodism was slow, but, considering the agitated condition of the public mind, remarkably steady. This is clearly shown by the Conference Minutes. Perhaps the universal belief in an impending war helped the itinerant evangelists in forcing upon the people the necessity of making their peace with God, for it is certain that the first great and protracted revival season in the history of American Methodism began in Virginia in 1775, when every "breeze which swept down from the north brought with it the clash of resounding arms."

The Conferences were held annually in Philadelphia, the preachers stationed, and the few necessary rules enacted for the direction and support of the slowly increasing corps of preachers. A few facts from the scanty Minutes of the Conferences, together with notes from the diaries of several of the chief actors in these events, comprise the sole data of the history of the work in these trying times.

The second Conference of the American preachers sat in Philadelphia on May 25 to 27, 1774, the general assistant, Rankin, presiding as Wesley's representative. The reports from the circuits showed the effect of a year of Rankin's rigorous administration of the discipline and of Asbury's policy of securing, to use his suggestive phrase, "a circulation of the preachers." The circuits had risen from six to ten, and the membership had nearly doubled. The "num-

bers in society" reported: New York, 222; Philadelphia, 204; New Jersey, 257; Baltimore, 738; Frederick, 175; Chester, 36; Kent, 150; Norfolk, 73; Brunswick, 218; total, 2,073. Rankin records his satisfaction with the proceedings, but Asbury gives hints of a determined opposition to the rules whose enforcement was so dear to him. It was now enacted that each circuit should provide a horse for the preacher in charge, for the Methodist itinerant of those primitive days spent more time in the saddle than under a roof. The "quarterage" or salary of each circuit preacher was fixed at £6, Pennsylvania currency, and traveling expenses. The general assistant, when he had a regular appointment, must be supported by those circuits on which he should labor. A general collection was ordered to be taken at Easter for paying chapel debts and relieving needy preachers. The last rule shows how rapidly the great wheel revolved in those days—"all the preachers to change at the end of six months," except the favored brethren in New York and Philadelphia, who were to interchange stations twice as frequently.

The third Conference met at Philadelphia May 17, 1775. A year of alarms had just culminated in the battle begun at Lexington and ending at Concord. The reverberation of "the shot heard round the world" was hurrying the patriot volunteers to the American camps at Cambridge. The tumult of the times disturbed the quiet of St. George's. Rankin notes the anxiety of the preachers over the critical situation of affairs, and says, "Our joy in God would have been abundantly more had it not been for the preparations of war that now rung throughout the city." The total membership reported was 3,148, an increase of 1,075. Nineteen preachers were stationed, several recruits having ventured out from England and a few volunteers coming up from the country.

The Conference fixed a day of fasting and prayer for the continuance of peace and the establishment of prosperity in the colonies. The day chosen was July 18, but before that day came round the patriots of New England had made their



FROM AN ENGRAVING BY LODGE AFTER THE DRAWING BY MILLAR

THE ATTACK ON BUNKER HILL.

gallant stand at Bunker Hill, and in another twelvemonth the Conference city was ringing with the news that the American colonies had declared themselves "free and independent States." These events were fraught with importance to the Methodists. But no prophet yet could foresee the outcome—that American independence would carry with it the independence of American Methodism and the transformation of the nondescript religious societies into a centralized and powerful Church.

From his arrival in 1773 until the work was thrown into disorder by the war Thomas Rankin continued in the general superintendency of the American societies. A few months

in each year he served the New York and Philadelphia people as their preacher, and the rest of his time was occupied in traveling through the connection, attending quarterly meetings, enforcing the discipline, and, as in the case of Gatch, never forgetting to levy reinforcements for his itinerant army. He was not widely popular as a preacher or among the preachers, being considered deficient in some of the genial and brotherly qualities so desirable in one of his calling. A very sober and steady man, he was strict himself and quick to bring an offender to book. On his first visit to New York he was "horrified by the extravagance of the dress of the women, and could not help thinking that so much pride and luxury must be the harbinger of some fearful judgment." As Increase and Cotton Mather and other leaders of the New England pulpit had always regarded the Indian wars and other calamities as judgments upon the people for their sins, so did Rankin account for the Revolution as a just retribution for the sins of the Methodists and other people of the day.

Leading spirits in the society in John Street had quarreled with Asbury, and had threatened "to shut the church door against Rankin" should he be as zealous as Asbury for the letter of the Wesleyan law. But the threat was abandoned. He had large congregations there, and speaks of a love feast at which "some of the poor black people spoke with power and pungency of the loving-kindness of the Lord. If," he concludes, "the rich in this city were as much devoted to God as the poor are, we should see wonders done."

Though as yet but a private in the ranks, one figure which emerges from the obscurity of this period is Francis Asbury. His unreserved devotion to the work and his irrepressible energy bring him constantly to view. Appointed in 1773 to

Baltimore Circuit, though greatly embarrassed by ill health, he continued to preach at his twenty-four appointments, and to enforce the Wesleyan Rules except where he was confronted by the inflexible Strawbridge, who had received his commission from no Conference and acknowledged no superior. Chills and fever, sermons sometimes to the number of four a day, long journeys in saddle or chaise over rough roads in wretched weather, the erection of new chapels in Baltimore, the adjusting of the societies and classes—these things occupied the chief preacher on Baltimore Circuit in the winter of 1773–1774. “Though my body has been indisposed,” wrote the Spartan, “the grace of God has rested on my soul.” Throngs came to hear him. The city clergymen recognized his native gifts, and Swoop and Otterbein, the Lutheran ministers, sought his friendship and adopted his methods.

In one year on his circuit this young evangelist doubled the membership, built five chapels, and opened so many new appointments that when he left it four circuits were created from its territory—Baltimore, Baltimore Town, Frederick, and Kent, which, together, required the services of eight preachers. One of his last acts in the Conference year was to lay the corner stone of the historic chapel in Lovely Lane, in Baltimore, on April 18, 1774, under whose roof ten years later the Christmas Conference was to organize the Methodist Episcopal Church and to consecrate himself as one of its first bishops.

The next year was a trying one for Asbury. The Conference sent him to New York, where a faction in the society was bitterly opposed to his administration. His wretched health at times silenced him, and forced upon him an inactivity that was to him the chief of torments. Late in the year

he was transferred to Philadelphia, but not until the spring of 1775, when he returned to his old friends in Baltimore, did he recover his strength sufficiently to throw himself into the harness with somewhat of the old vigor. He preached with great success, and the classes were recruited with white and black—with negro bond servants and with representatives of the first families of the province.

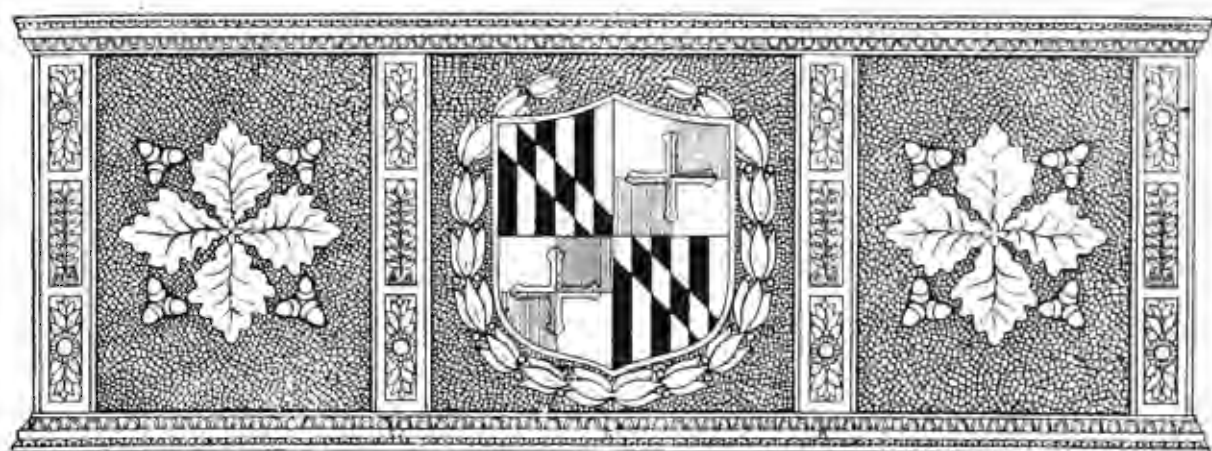
On the last day of April, 1775, news came to Asbury in Baltimore of the armed resistance of Massachusetts men to the king's troops at Concord Bridge. English born though he was, his Journal contains not a word of partisan tenor. The King of heaven was more to him than the Hanoverian, and his only comment on this open rebellion against King George is, "Surely the Lord will overrule and make all these things subservient to the spiritual welfare of his Church."

Norfolk, Va., where Pilmoor, Williams, Watters, and others had labored in former years, was Asbury's appointment in 1775-1776. His orderly nature was aghast at the condition in which he found the society. The class meetings were neglected, the rules of class and society disregarded, and the preaching place a tumble-down playhouse. Though still far from well, he contrived to make the round of his appointments, to start a building fund for a chapel, and to enforce the discipline. "Some of the members seemed a little refractory"

"but without discipline we should soon be as a rope of sand, it must be enforced, let who will be displeased." Before the end of his first quarter at Norfolk there came a letter from his chief, Thomas Rankin, informing him that he, with others of the missionaries, "had deliberately concluded to return to England." Not so lightly was this steward to abandon his Master's vineyard. "I can by no means agree to leave such a field for gathering souls to Christ as we have

in America. It would be an eternal dishonor to the Methodists that we should all leave three thousand souls who desire to commit themselves to our care; neither is it the part of a good shepherd to leave his flock in time of danger; therefore I am determined, by the grace of God, not to leave them, let the consequence be what it may. So I wrote my sentiments to Mr. Thomas Rankin and Mr. George Shadford."

The events of autumn brought the war to his very door, and he reluctantly left his people at Norfolk to go to Brunswick Circuit, through a region resounding with alarms. A few weeks later Norfolk was burned by the Tories, and the progress of Methodism in the place rudely checked. In February, 1776, in obedience to Rankin's summons, Asbury left Virginia, "which pleased him in preference to all other places" that he had seen, and in due time, "by the good providence of God," arrived at Baltimore, where his weary frame succumbed. There he rested while the fourth Conference was held, May, 1776.



CHAPTER XIV

Asbury's Coming to the Front

THE COLONIAL ARISTOCRACY.—HENRY DORSEY GOUGH.—PERSECUTION.
—RECRUITS FROM ABROAD.—AMERICAN VOLUNTEERS.—DEATH OF
WILLIAMS AND FAIRBURY.

THE impression that primitive Methodism made converts only among the lowly is far from true. Be it said to its glory that the common people heard its Gospel gladly, but it is likewise true that in England and in America its adherents numbered not a few of gentle blood and social eminence. This was notably the case in the southern colonies, where Methodism wore the guise of a society of the pious within the Church of England, to which communion the colonial aristocracy belonged.

Henry Dorsey Gough was one of the colonial gentry who early joined the Methodists. He was a Marylander of wealth and position. His country seat, Perry Hall, a dozen miles from Baltimore, was regarded as the most elegant estate in the province. His wife, a daughter of Governor Ridgeley, was the worthy mistress of such a mansion. For the diversion of a gay company at his country seat he took them on one occasion to hear the latest novelty—a Methodist parson. The preacher was Francis Asbury, and his message carried

conviction to the rich man's heart. The buoyant faith of one of his own slaves taught him that there were joys that wealth could not buy. On his knees in his chamber he found pardon and peace, and boldly proclaimed to the revelers of his house-party: "I have found the Methodists' blessing! I have



DRAWN BY JOHN P. DAVIS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

PERRY HALL IN 1900.

The mansion of Henry Dorsey Gough, situated twelve miles from Baltimore on the Belair Road. The house has been rebuilt since its partial destruction by fire about 1825.

found the Methodists' God!" His gentle wife, whose pious inclinations he had hitherto restrained, now joined the society with him. On their private grounds they erected a chapel, which they furnished with a bell—the first Methodist bell in America. Perry Hall, as we may well imagine, was now always open for the weary itinerants and many of them preached in its chapel, where the "hands" were assembled daily for morning and evening prayer. In the absence of a

preacher the governor's daughter herself would read a chapter, give out a hymn, and engage in prayer. The noble wife continued a consistent Christian. Her husband for a number of years returned to his former worldly life, but in 1800 Asbury brought him again to a sense of his hopeless condition and he again joined the Methodists, never to leave them. At his death, in 1808, Asbury was present to comfort him. The members of the General Conference, which was then in session at Baltimore, walked in procession at his funeral. Bishop Asbury, who had twice led Harry Gough out from the worldly temptations that beset him, and who had been the most welcome guest in the mansion to which the élite of Maryland were proud to be bidden, described his departed friend as "a man much respected and beloved; as a husband, a father, and a master well worthy of imitation; his charities were as numerous as proper objects to a Christian were likely to make them; and the souls and bodies of the poor were administered to in the manner of a Christian who remembered the precepts and followed the example of his divine Master."

Three years saw great changes in the personality of the Conference. Young men came into the field for a quarter or a year and as quickly dropped out. The heartstrings of the English preachers were ever drawing them toward home and kindred, and every year before the war some yielded to their inclinations and their fears. A few of the men hastily taken up to meet the urgent call for more preachers proved unworthy and were dropped from the societies. Of the ten men stationed by the first Conference, 1773, only four—Rankin, Asbury, Shadford, and Watters—remained on the rolls at the fourth Conference, 1776, when twenty-four men received appointments. Of the others, Wright had left the country, Whitworth had backslidden, King had married—

which was then synonymous with withdrawing from the traveling ministry—Williams had died, Yearbry's name had unaccountably disappeared, and Strawbridge was left temporarily without appointment.

The recruits of these years were chiefly "raised up"—as the phrase ran—from the American societies, though a few Old World Methodists still found heart to face the rumors of



DRAWN BY G. WILLARD BONTE.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE SLAVE JAIL, PERRY HALL.

Erected in 1770 by Henry Dorsey Gough. Tradition says that the prayer of the slave who led Gough to Christ was offered in this building.

war and remain steadfast to their vows. Of the ten new names in the Conference roll of 1774 a large proportion were Americans. Three of the five accessions of the next year were Englishmen. With the outbreak of hostilities most of the veterans retired, and after 1776 the Conference was very largely composed of native Americans, although then, as now, some of the best workers in this section of Methodism were of British and Irish origin.

Philip Gatch is the best known of the American preachers who joined the Conference in 1774. With him came other Marylanders: Philip Ebert, who was corrupted by Whit-

worth and after a year's service fell away to Universalism; Richard Webster, one of Strawbridge's converts; and "honest, simple" Daniel Ruff, of Harford County, who was the first native American preacher stationed in New York city; Isaac Rollins, of Maryland, and William Duke also began to travel in this year, as did John Wade, perhaps a Virginian. The three recruits from abroad were Samuel Spragg, probably an Englishman, and two Irish preachers—Edward Drumgoole, a converted papist, and Robert Lindsay, who soon went back to Europe.

In 1775 the name of Richard Owen, or Owings, the first or one of the first local preachers raised up in America as the result of Strawbridge's labors, now finds a place on the roll of Conference as a temporary supply. John Cooper, whose father had thrown a shovel of hot embers upon him because he found him at prayer, was recommended by Gatch and enlisted for a long and useful term of service. In this year Wesley sent out two more of his lay preachers—James Dempster, an Edinburgh man, who soon went over to the Presbyterians, and Martin Rodda, whose indiscreet circulation of royal proclamations gave color to the charge that the Methodists were secret emissaries of the British crown. He had to flee for his life to the protection of a British gunboat, and then to England, to the relief of patriotic Americans. William Glendenning, a dreamy Scot, was the fifth in the class of 1775. His mind ultimately gave way. He "lost his light," as the phrase of the early Methodists ran, and after eight or ten years ceased to travel.

While Asbury was in southeastern Virginia in the fall of 1775 it became his sad duty to preach the funeral sermon of Robert Williams. This zealous worker, "the first Wesleyan evangelist who came to the assistance of the Methodists in this

country," this shrewd Methodist, whose circulation of books and tracts long antedated the founding of the Book Concern, had recently married and settled in Virginia, near Norfolk. He was the first of the itinerants in America to die, excepting perhaps the Edward Evans of whose work so little is now known. Asbury said of Williams: "He has been a very

Rec^d. New York 18th Sept. 1769 of Mr. Wm. Lupton
seven pounds for twenty days work done to the preaching house
£7.0.0 Phil. Embury

Rec^d. N. Y. 16th Sept. 1769 of Wm. Lupton one
pound 11/0 for sundries laid out for the preaching house
£1.11.0 Phil. Embury

New York Sept. 20th 1769 Then rec^d from Mr. Williams
two pounds 5s. for a beaver hat dd. Mr. Williams.
£2.5.0 James Jarvis

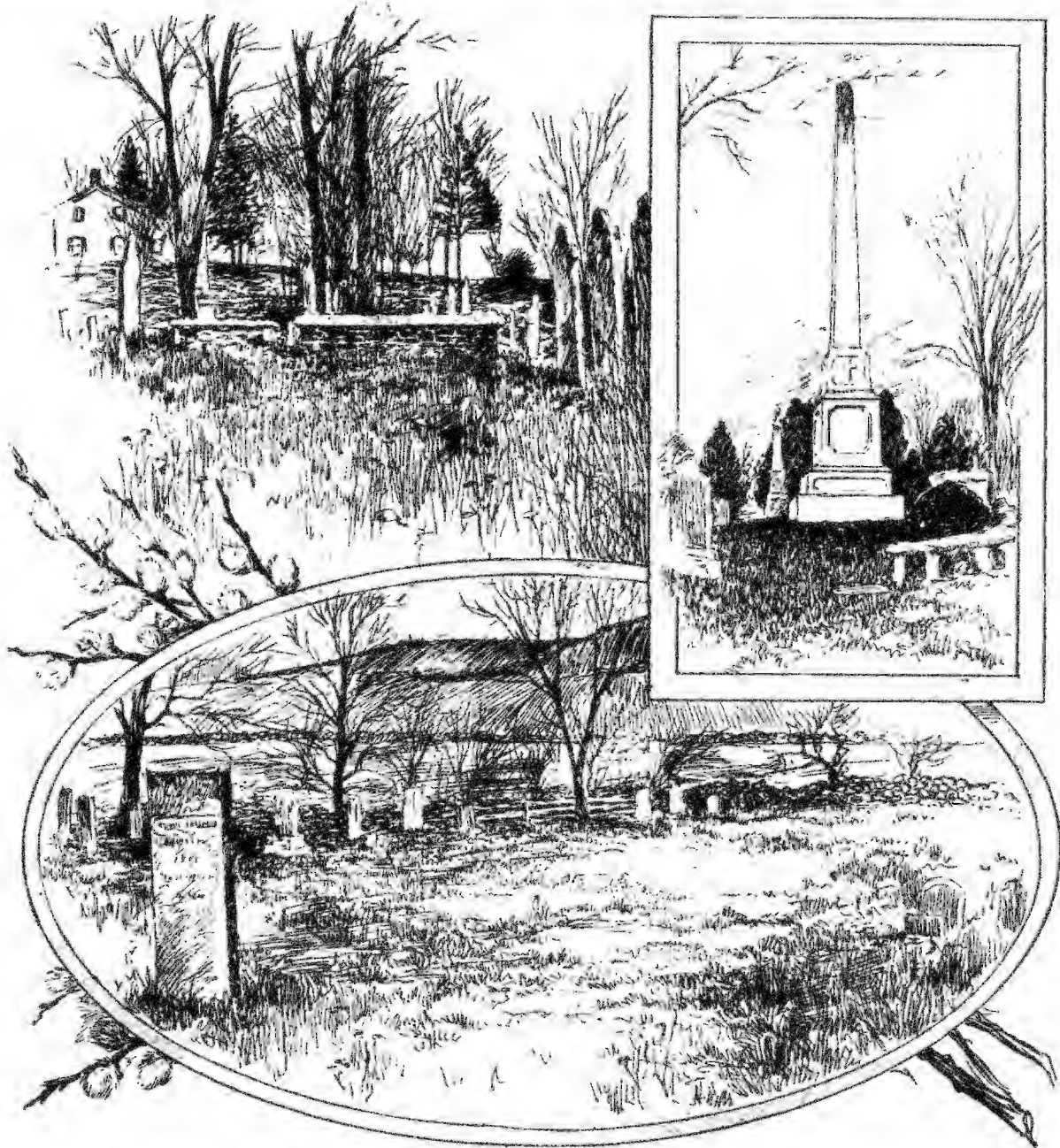
Rec^d. N. York 29th Sept. 1769 of Mr. Wm. Lupton for
Boards Bt. for the Methⁿ Preaching House one pound
£1.0.0 Paul Heck

RECEIPTS OF EMBURY, HECK, AND JARVIS.

On account of work done in the erection of the first preaching place in John Street, New York. Reproduced from the original entries in the "Old Book" of records.

useful, laborious man, and the Lord gave him many seals to his ministry. Perhaps no one in America has been an instrument of awakening so many souls as God has awakened by him." His memory deserves a lasting memorial, and our denominational gallery contains few more striking pictures than that of Robert Williams, on the evening of his first day ashore, standing, a stranger and penniless, on the steps of a vacant dwelling in Norfolk and singing a hymn from his little

sheep-bound book. He was known from New York to the Carolinas, but it was to Virginia that he gave most labor, and years after his death Jesse Lee, whose family Williams had



DRAWN BY WARREN B. DAVIS.

AFTER PHOTOGRAPHS.

PHILIP EMBURY'S THREE BURIAL PLACES.

First resting place, Ashgrove, N. Y.

Embury's monument, Cambridge, N. Y.

Site of old Ashgrove church.

led into the Methodist fold, wrote of him, "Although he is dead, he yet speaketh to many of his spiritual children, while they remember his faithful preaching and his holy walk."

Philip Embury, too, had passed from earth in these years. Since his removal from New York city in 1770 to the little settlement of the congenial folk in Camden Valley, now East Salem, N. Y., he had lived there as a farmer, preaching occasionally, and forming classes, though removed from the regions which were visited by the itinerant preachers. Here he died, in August, 1773. Nearly sixty years afterward his remains were disinterred from their lonely resting place, on the Bininger farm, and removed to Ashgrove, where he had gathered the first society formed north of New York city. An eloquent oration was pronounced on this occasion by the Rev. John Newland Maffitt. In 1866 the remains were again removed and placed in the Gods acre at Cambridge, N. Y.

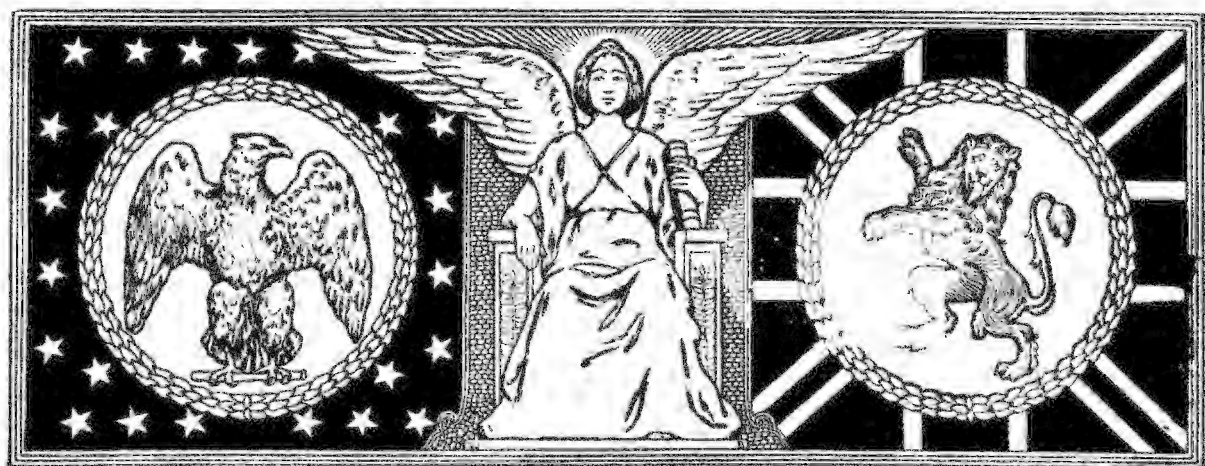
The monument over the grave of the carpenter preacher bears this inscription:

PHILIP EMBURY

The earliest American Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church
here found his last earthly resting place

PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS.

Born in Ireland, an Emigrant to
New York, Embury was the first to gather
a class in that city, and to set
in motion a train of measures,
which resulted in the founding of
John Street Church, the cradle of American
Methodism, and the introduction of
a system which has beautified the
earth with salvation and increased the joys
of Heaven.



CHAPTER XV

"Tory! Tory!"

A SIGNIFICANT BLUNDER.—GROUNDS FOR DISTRUST OF THE METHODISTS.—JOHN WESLEY GOES INTO POLITICS.—THE CALM ADDRESS AND THE TURBULENCE IT EVOKED.—TRUTH AND ERROR.—THE REPRESENTATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH.

AT the close of a Methodist meeting in White Plains, N. Y., shortly after the Revolution, when the preacher gave the usual invitation for interested persons to meet him for private conversation, among those who remained was an old gentleman who had been a devoted Loyalist throughout the war. He had heard that the Methodist preachers were secret emissaries of King George, who were now intriguing to reestablish the British dominion here, and he wished to connect himself with their organization. When he found that what he had mistaken for a Tory club was in fact a religious society he took his hat and went out, saying, "If that is the case, I am done with you." The old gentleman's amusing blunder was only an exaggeration of an error which many persons had made in the first years of the war, and the Methodists had to take pay in taunts, threats, and open violence for the doubtful name for patriotism which prejudice had thrust upon some of them.

The grounds of accusation once commonly brought—that “all the Methodists were Tories”—are plausible enough, and to the excited vision of the time might well have seemed convincing. The Methodist societies here were a branch of a great British organization. John Wesley, their venerated head and accredited spokesman, had publicly defended the cause of his country and the duty of nonresistance in America. The Wesleyan leaders in America were, with one conspicuous exception, native Englishmen, and were recent emigrants, whose hearts were still in the old country. This was notably the case in New York, from which town Wesley heard in January, 1779, that “all the Methodists there are firm for the government, and on that account persecuted by the rebels, only not to the death.” Even where the membership was largely American, and patriotic at heart, many Methodists, like most Quakers, were noncombatants from principle, and could not with a good conscience bear arms against their fellow-men.

Thus doubly exposed to obloquy by reason of their own scruples and their intimate relations with the hostile party in England, the handful of American Methodists—in 1775 they actually numbered but one in a thousand of the inhabitants—were subjected to such inflammatory slanders as the following, quoted from a paper dated Baltimore, May 4, 1777: “All the denomination called Methodists are enemies to our cause, under the mask of religion, and are countenanced by the Tories. One of their preachers did lately, in this place, tell his hearers that every man killed in battle would surely go to hell.”

John Wesley's unfortunate excursion, in 1775, upon the troubled sea of British politics increased the perils of his followers in America.

Despite his three-score years and twelve the Methodist apostle was still traversing the United Kingdom with unabated energy, preaching, holding Conferences, planting schools and founding orphanages, and pouring forth printed books and pamphlets at an amazing rate. No man in the realm was better known than he; certainly none knew the masses so well or exerted such a direct and salutary influence upon their lives and opinions. His acquaintance with the state of affairs in America, through frequent advices from his traveling missionaries there, was probably quite as thorough as that possessed by the ministers of the crown. Moreover, he kept close watch of public matters which bore upon his work, and as early as 1770 he had said, "I do not defend the measures which have been taken with regard to America; I doubt whether any man can defend them, either on a footing of law, equity, or prudence." In June, 1775, when the tension of public feeling was extreme, he addressed a frank letter to Lord North in which, without going into a discussion of the matter in dispute between the crown and the colonists, he set forth, in words which now read like a prophecy, the dan-



FROM AN OLD ENGLISH ENGRAVING BY ROBERTS

AN AMERICAN RIFLEMAN.

gers into which an American war would plunge the British nation.

As the crisis approached he admonished his friends in America neither to defend the English policy nor to espouse

the grievance of the Americans, but to beware of entrance into the quarrel. This was the burden of a letter which he sent to Thomas Rankin in March, 1775, to be circulated among the preachers. In this he said in part :

“ MY DEAR

BRETHREN :

You were never in your lives in so critical a situation as you are at this time. It is your part to be peace-makers ; to be loving and tender to all ; but to addict



FROM AN OLD PRINT.

READING THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

yourselves to no party. In spite of all solicitations, of rough or smooth words, say not one word against one or the other side. Keep yourselves pure ; do all you can to help and soften all ; but beware how you adopt another's jar."

Parliament now declared that a state of rebellion existed

in America. The nation rang with excited discussion, and the policy of the government was hotly denounced by a large and powerful party. At this juncture Samuel Johnson—the celebrated essayist and lexicographer—came to the defense of the ministry with his pamphlet, *Taxation no Tyranny*. The learned man, who stood easily at the head of English *littérateurs*, was an arch Tory, and his attitude toward the colonists may be inferred from his deliverance to Boswell: “Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging.” His pamphlet fell into Wesley’s hands, and its weighty arguments convinced him that the government had acted within the bounds of law and right. Eager to diffuse the same opinions among his followers, he abridged Johnson’s pamphlet into a four-page leaflet and issued it from the Book Room as *A Calm Address to Our American Colonies*, by the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.

The government, delighted by the accession of such an ally, bought up an edition of the tract, and had it given out at every church door in London. Forty thousand copies were scattered through the realm in three weeks. It was one of the sensations of a year remarkable for great events. Every enemy that Wesley had made in years, with many friends whom this publication alienated, joined in the outcry against him. The Calvinist Toplady, the author of the immortal “Rock of Ages,” led a pack who hounded him as a plagiarist, in spite of Dr. Johnson’s expressed satisfaction with Wesley’s use of his arguments. The Liberals declared that he had written “with one eye upon a pension and the other upon heaven,” and it was hinted that his compensation would be in the shape of a bishop’s miter, probably with an American diocese.

These baseless slanders hurt no one except their reckless authors. Nobody believes that Wesley was plagiarist, place-hunter, or political turncoat, and all good men regret that a man like Toplady should have stooped to utter such scurrilities. When Wesley participated in this controversy the New



FROM THE ENGRAVING BY H. COCK.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

Englanders had attacked the flag of his country, and however ill-timed, and reckless of the consequence to his American followers, his prompt alliance with the government was natural, honorable, and patriotic.

The Calm Address to Our American Col-

onies was expressly intended for circulation in England. But the uproar which it begot was heard beyond the sea, and copies of the little firebrand soon followed. When they arrived the time for argument had passed, and instead of serving a useful purpose here Wesley's tract only strengthened suspicions, already current, that these peculiar religious meetings of the Methodists, which were addressed from time to time in secret session by traveling Englishmen of unclerical cut, were nurseries of treason.

Wesley, in a letter to Rankin, was disposed to think that

his little tract had been misunderstood and its effect exaggerated. There "was not a sharp word in it," he declared, yet "many are excessively angry and would willingly burn me and it together." He was "all for love and tender measures," and if he should have an interview with a great personage (Lord North), he "would tell him so without any circumlocution."

Francis Asbury, who was on the ground and knew the American people, probably expressed the sentiment of the great majority of his collaborators when he wrote in February, 1776, concerning Wesley's political utterances: "I am truly sorry that the venerable man ever dipped into the politics of America. However, it discovers Mr. Wesley's conscientious attachment to the government under which he lives. Had he been a subject of America, no doubt he would have been as zealous an advocate of the American cause. Some inconsiderate persons have taken occasion to censure the Methodists in America on account of Mr Wesley's political sentiments."

We regard the true solution of Wesley's attitude toward the American Revolution about thus: He saw that the Americans had their just grievances, and believed the government at home was unjust. But when the Revolution broke out, and open war had begun, he felt that he must be true to his own country, and believed that hostilities on the part of the colonies were wrong. In due time he became convinced that it was impossible to conquer the colonies, and that their independence should be acknowledged. From that moment his sympathies were with the colonies.

Much has been published on both sides of this question. But it is fairest to judge Wesley by his own words, which we now quote from the most important communication by

that time secretary of state for the colonies, and is an energetic and passionate protest against the war in America. "All my prejudices," says the writer, "are against the Americans, for I am a High Churchman, the son of a High Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notion of passive obedience and nonresistance. And yet, in spite of all my rooted prejudices, I cannot avoid thinking, if I think at all, that an oppressed people asked for nothing more than their legal rights, and that in the most modest and inoffensive manner which the nature of the case would allow. But, waiving all considerations of right or wrong, is it common sense to use force toward the Americans?" Wesley then goes on to speak of "the danger to be apprehended of an attack from abroad on Ireland, while all the available British forces are engaged on the other side of the Atlantic;" relates an anecdote to show how little reliance was to be placed upon "our valorous militia;" draws a parallel between the time at which he is writing and the period of "the rebellion" between 1640 and 1650, as regards "dearness of provisions, depression of trade, and hatred of poor for the rich;" and concludes with the impressive exhortation, "Remember Rehoboam; remember Philip II; remember Charles I!" While Wesley was penning this remarkable appeal the news of the struggle at Lexington and the battle of Bunker Hill was on its way to England.



FROM THE ENGRAVING BY WARREN.

THE EARL OF DARTMOUTH.

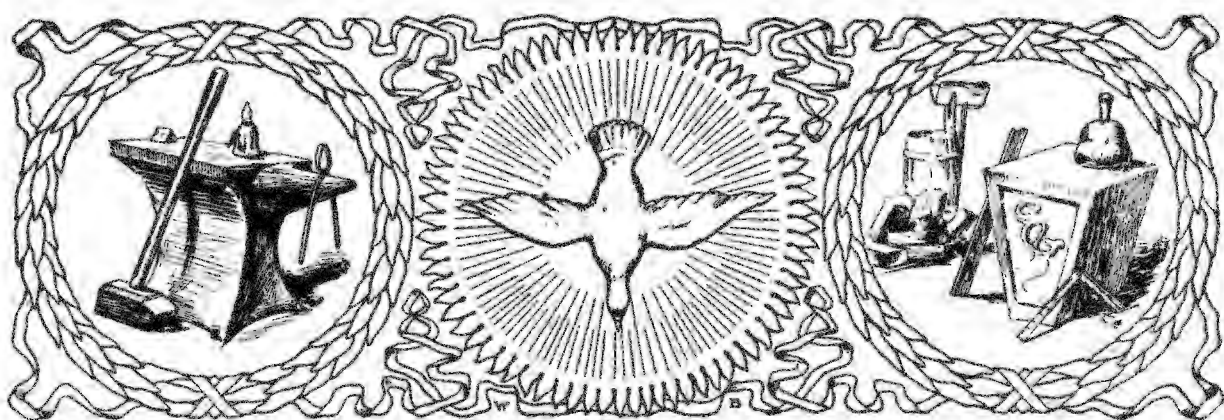
The colonial minister to whom Wesley wrote concerning American affairs.

The absurd idea that the Methodist body was a Tory propa-

ganda was probably limited to a few localities, if not to a few minds. In New York the leading members were thorough Loyalists, many of them being recent emigrants from the old country. Elsewhere the membership was divided in political sentiment, as were all communities at the time. There were Loyalists in every part of the country. Indeed their number and prominence were but now beginning to be recognized. But among the Methodists of American birth the proportion of patriots was large. "William Watters, Philip Gatch, Richard Ivy, Joseph Everett, Thomas Morrell, Thomas Ware, and William Mills—all preachers either before or after the war—were true-hearted Americans," and some of them fought in the ranks. Francis Asbury, Englishman though he was, and resolute to do or say nothing which could injure his influence as a Christian missionary, was heard to say, "England always had the wrong foot foremost in regard to America." He was the leader and representative man among the Methodists after the withdrawal of his English brethren, yet, though often under great provocation—being hunted like a convict for a time—his course was manly and straightforward, but always adhering to his principle as a man of peace.

After the fever of war had abated Asbury's broad-minded sympathy with the struggle of the Americans was recognized, and the old slanders died, except on the tongues of a few who used the old poison to tip their theological shafts against the conquering advance of the Methodist hosts. The Church, of which Francis Asbury now became the official head and guiding hand was among the first to catch the spirit of the new-born republic. It was among the first to address its congratulations to George Washington as the first President of the United States. It drew to itself great numbers of Continental veterans, who settled the New West at the close of

the war. Its members rapidly won political preferment. From the War of Independence until now the great ecclesiastical organization which has grown out of the feeble societies of 1775 has had many of the characteristics of a national Church—the most numerous and perhaps the most truly representative body of Protestant Christians in the New World. In the presence of more than a century of such a record of true Americanism we need not hesitate to face the fact that when this land was first racked by a civil discord a few Methodists of English birth did espouse the cause of their king.



CHAPTER XVI

The Great Virginia Revival

AN UNEXPECTED AWAKENING.—DEVEREUX JARRATT.—ROBERT WILLIAMS AND HIS BOOKS.—SHADFORD'S DESPONDENCY.—THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN OPENED.—A CONVERTED DANCING-MASTER.—ASBURY'S REVIEW.—RANKIN'S OBSERVATIONS.

IN the latter half of 1775 and the spring and summer of 1776, at the very time when the English missionaries were beginning to waver in their determination to remain longer among the rebellious Americans, an extensive region of southeastern Virginia was visited by an extraordinary revival of religion. It was the first of those widespread and protracted awakenings which have at rare intervals marked American Methodist history, and the accounts which have come down to us of its origin, growth, and the height of intensity which it reached are at once complete and authentic. It was a pentecostal experience long remembered as "the Great Revival in Virginia."

The most complete review of the occurrences is given in Asbury's Journal in a paper communicated to him by the Rev. Devereux Jarratt, the Church of England minister, who was himself more than an interested spectator. Jarratt was a native Virginian, and a man of rare spiritual gifts. When he became a rector of Bath parish, in Dinwiddie County, in

1763, he found his flock both godless and ignorant. He doubted "if even the form of godliness was to be found in one family of this large and populous parish." And, shame to tell, he knew of no clergyman out of the ninety or more in the Old Dominion who believed or preached the need of personal salvation. "All seek their own, and not the things that are Christ's," was his lament. Only seven or eight persons partook of Communion in any of his three churches, and his evangelical sermons were a startling innovation.

The Rev. Archibald McRoberts, the rector of an adjoining parish, joined him in his evangelical preaching about the time when Embury's tongue was loosed in New York and the fire from the altar touched the lips of farmer Strawbridge in the clearings beyond the Potomac. Mr. Jarratt made some device to organize his converts into a religious society for their mutual benefit in spiritual things. He rode a circuit, moreover, like a Methodist preacher.

At this critical time there came to that section Robert Williams, with his saddlebags full of Methodist tracts and his heart and soul intent upon the conversion of sinners. This was early in 1773. He seemed to Jarratt what he was—"a plain, artless, indefatigable preacher." The rector took him to his rectory and to his heart. He found the evangelist experienced in the work which he had been awkwardly attempting, and, being persuaded that Methodism meant rather a revival within the old Church than separation from it, he welcomed the preachers to his parish and encouraged the formation of societies on the Wesleyan plan.

A number of societies had already been gathered by Williams and his successors when the Conference of 1775 sent Shadford to travel that circuit. This itinerant was one of the most faithful and loving men in the whole field, but his two

years in America had not been conspicuously successful, and on his way to Virginia he was much dejected in spirit. "I saw myself so vile and worthless as I cannot express," he says, "and wondered that God should employ me." But the one great experience of his life awaited him here. Jarratt had been "sensible that a change of preachers was wanting," and at Shadford's advent, "while their ears were opened by novelty, God sent his word home upon their hearts." Conviction was general, and the first days of 1776 were a season of prayer. People of all ages and conditions were affected. Ten or twelve would yield to conviction in a day. The fire ran along the circuit of Shadford's preaching stations for several hundred miles—into Brunswick, Sussex, Lunenburg, Prince George, and Amelia Counties. In May the Methodist workers, with many who had been touched in heart, gathered at a chapel in Jarratt's parish for a quarterly meeting.

The love feast in which the exercises culminated was long famous in Methodist story. No such exhibition of exalted feeling had ever been known. Shouts and moans and tears mingled with the songs and prayers, and the dispersing throngs carried the fame of that day to their homes for many miles around. "Scarce any conversation was to be heard throughout the circuit but concerning the things of God." Even the gossips were busy telling how this one could not gain the sense of pardon, while that other had "come through" into perfect peace.

The sympathetic rector frankly admits that on such occasions there was often wildfire mixed with the sacred flame, but in this case the nervous excitement never rose to any considerable height, nor was it of long continuance. In certain meetings there were not that decency and order that he could have wished. Some wept for grief, others shouted

for joy, so that it was hard to distinguish one from the other till the voice of joy prevailed and the people shouted with a great shout, so that it might be heard afar off.

An eyewitness of that pentecostal love feast says: "As many as pleased rose, one after another, and spoke in few words of the goodness of God to their souls. Before three had done speaking you might see a solemn sense of the presence of God visible on every countenance, while tears were flowing from many eyes. When the passions of the people were rising too high, and breaking through all restraint, the preacher gently checked them by giving out a few verses of a hymn. Some careless creatures of the politer sort, who would needs go in to see what this strange thing meant, felt an unusual power, so that, like Saul among the prophets, they fell down upon their knees and cried for mercy among the rest."

The watch service, attended by upward of threescore of the most zealous, continued until two hours after sunrise, and was accompanied by expressions of the most deeply excited feeling. "Half a dozen would be praying at once, in different parts of the room, for distressed persons, while others were exhorting."

Such soul-stirring scenes, from which scores of men and women emerged with altered purposes and new aspirations, were repeated at intervals throughout that eventful summer in spite of the semitropical heats and the surging political emotions of the people, whose delegates had just taken the momentous step of declaring the Americans independent of British rule. Late in the summer a Sussex County Churchman wrote: "About seven years I have been exhorting my neighbors, but very few would hear. Now, blessed be God, there are very few that will not hear. It is common

with us for men and women to fall down as dead under an exhortation, but many more under prayer, perhaps twenty at a time. And some that have not fallen to the earth have shown the same distress, wringing their hands, smiting their breasts, and begging all to pray for them."

A reckless young woman, hearing of these strange prostrations, said she would "come to the meeting and help them up." She came, but was powerless to resist, and "soon she wanted helping up herself." Meetings lasted from midday to midnight, and some from midnight until long past sunrise. Open enemies of religion and "some hoary-headed ones who had been strict Pharisees from their youth up" were swept along by the tide.

A dancing-master in a scarlet coat came to one of Shadford's week-day meetings. On Sunday, clad in more sober green, he traveled several miles to hear the new preacher. He was attentive, and brought others with him. One day a friend said to Shadford: "You spoiled a fine dancing-master last week. He was so cut under preaching, and feels such a load of sin upon his conscience, that he moves very heavily; nay, he cannot shake his heels at all. He had a large and profitable school, but has given it up and intends to dance no more." He soon afterward opened a school for heads instead of heels, and became a devoted Methodist.

Some time after the excitement had subsided Asbury wrote an account of the revival to Wesley in England. He said that when Mr. Shadford went in discouragement to his station on the extensive Brunswick Circuit he found about eight hundred members, all told, very imperfectly organized and with few leaders. The evangelist and his young helpers set about speaking individually with each member after the sermon, by which means "they learned more of our doctrine and

discipline in a year than in double the time before," and a season of genuine spiritual refreshing ensued. It was some time before the Rev. Mr. Jarratt invited Shadford to include his parish among his preaching stations, "but in a few months he saw more fruit of his labors than he had done for many years."

Thomas Rankin, on his annual tour of the connection, came into Virginia, and recorded in his Journal some of the marvelous scenes—marvels even to this veteran evangelist who had seen multitudes of curious hearers melt in the flame of Whitefield's appeals. On the last day of June, 1776, saddle-weary from an exhausting journey under a burning sun, Rankin was gladdened by the sight of his dear friend Shadford, with whom he had crossed the Atlantic three years before. Notwithstanding his fatigue the superintendent preached twice that day in the little chapel. At the afternoon service the room was thronged, and the door and windows framed masses of eager faces, white and black. When the preacher began to bring home the words of his text "such power descended that hundreds fell to the ground, and the house seemed to shake with the presence of God." The tide of feeling overflowed the sermon. The preacher paused in wonder and sat down. Shadford was awe-struck. "Husbands were inviting their wives to go to heaven; wives their husbands, parents their children, and children their parents. In short, those who were happy in God themselves were for bringing all their friends to him in their arms."

The meeting began at four o'clock in the afternoon of that long June day, and this "effusion of the Spirit" went on until dark. The assembly was moved quite beyond the power of the preachers to control, and their voices in song or exhortation fell on heedless ears. That day week—the week of

the Declaration of Independence—Rankin had to pause in the midst of his sermon, on the prophet's vision of the valley of dry bones, to beg his hearers to compose themselves. "But they could not," he says; "some on their knees and some on their faces were crying mightily to God all the time I was preaching. Hundreds of negroes were among them, with the tears streaming down their faces." Thus it went on that evening and every day of the torrid week which ensued. "It seemed as if all the country for nine or ten miles around were ready to turn to God."

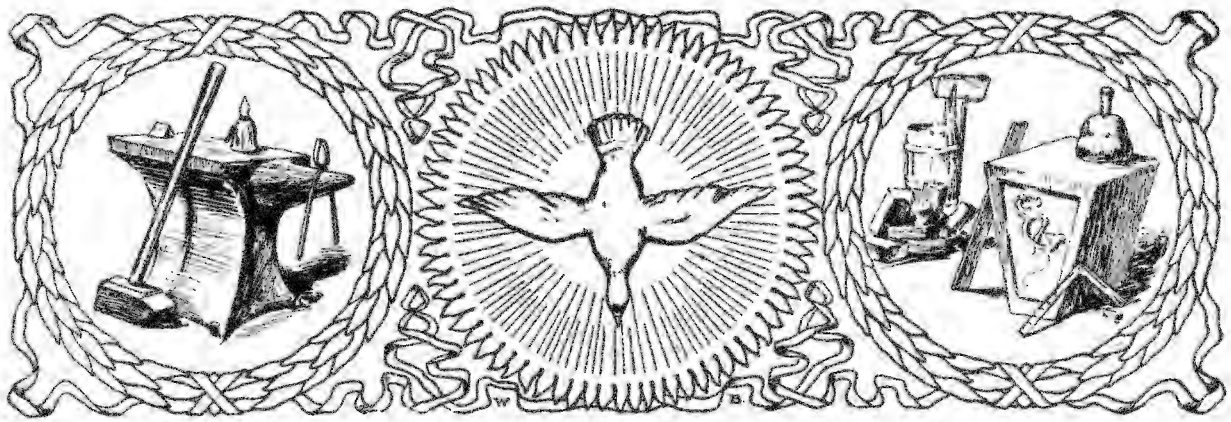
At the Conference of 1776 the gain of membership on Shadford's circuit amounted to over eight hundred souls. The movement did not stop with the Conference session, and was not bounded by the limit of Shadford's parish. Asbury tells us that it spread into fourteen counties of Virginia as well as into Bute and Halifax, in North Carolina. Lednum, a careful student and antiquarian, is probably within the truth when he asserts that the number of souls awakened in Virginia in these two years was not less than four thousand—a number greater than the total membership of the Methodist societies in America as recorded in the Conference Minutes of 1775.

There is abundant evidence that the Virginia revival was more than an ebullition of emotion. Among the persons who became Methodists under its influence was Jesse Lee, the first historian of the Church, the apostle of free grace among the New England believers in election and foreordination, and one of the most useful and honored of its ministers. Nor is it to be judged alone by such conspicuous examples of Christian living. A magistrate told Rankin that "before the Methodists came to these parts, when he was called by his office to attend the court there was nothing but drunkenness,

cursing, swearing, and fighting most of the time the court sat; whereas now nothing is heard but prayer and praise, and conversing about God and the things of God.”

For nearly a month Rankin rode the long circuit which had rung with the shouts of the great revival. Every day he became more deeply impressed with the earnestness of the people. His plans, which were already forming for his departure from America, must have been sorely shaken at sight of fields so white for the harvest. “Indeed there was no getting away from these people,” he says, “while I was able to speak one sentence for God.”

In the closing days of July the greatest of quarterly meetings was held. A throng numbered by thousands assembled from all parts of the rural circuit. A spacious tabernacle, constructed of boughs, furnished refreshing shelter. The testimonies in the solemn love feast melted hundreds to tears, while others cried to God for pardon or holiness. Jarratt, the friendly rector, preached at the watch meeting. “Surely,” concludes the sober-minded Rankin, “surely for the work wrought on these two days many will praise God to all eternity.”



CHAPTER XVII

A Son of Thunder

THE GLORY OF METHODISM.—BENJAMIN ABBOTT.—HIS EARLY LIFE.—CONVERSION.—CHARACTERISTICS AS A PREACHER.—INTENSITY.—PHYSICAL EFFECTS.—“THE SLAIN LAY ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE.”—SUBSEQUENT CAREER.

IT was the glory of the Methodist revival in England that it preached salvation from present sin not less than from future punishment. Historians with no prejudice for religion have noted with wonder the moral reformation which the Wesleys and their unlettered preachers wrought among the rough laborers in the northern collieries, in the clay pits of Staffordshire, and among the miners and smugglers of Cornwall. The lives of the early Wesleyan preachers abound in narratives of remarkable conversions of notoriously sinful men.

The English missionaries brought the same Gospel across the sea and proclaimed it everywhere with similar results. Its life-giving influence not only imparted spirit and purpose to such moral youths as William Watters and Philip Gatch, but it arrested and transformed into messengers of light such mature and reckless sinners as Benjamin Abbott.

Abbott was the son of a well-to-do Pennsylvania farmer. His father dying, the lad was apprenticed to a hatter in Philadelphia. “I soon fell into bad company,” he confesses,

"and from that to card-playing, cockfighting, and many other evil practices"—no uncommon history for a country lad adrift among the temptations of the town. Before serving out his time he abandoned his trade and became a farmer in New Jersey, where he married a strict Presbyterian woman, and, to use his homely phrase, "a great meeting body"



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY REV. J. G. EDWARDS.

OLD SOUTH STREET CHAPEL, SALEM, N. J.

Benjamin Abbott is said to have been baptized here.

Though he called himself a Presbyterian, and often went to church with his wife, his life was scandalously wicked. His wife's prayers and entreaties and his own occasional good resolutions wrought no permanent reform, and he was known through all the region as a hard drinker, quarrelsome in his cups, recklessly profane, and one who gambled away his substance. His escapades often brought him before the courts,

and the tradition was probably not without foundation that he once knocked the magistrate off the bench, saying, "I might as well be hung for an old sheep as for a lamb."

It was a dark time respecting experimental religion. Shocking indeed is the commentary upon the barren theology of the day that the husband of a professed Christian, himself not a stranger to church doors, should have reached his fortieth year without having ever heard of the nature of conviction or conversion, or of anyone saying that he possessed the pardoning love of God in his soul or knew his sins forgiven. Yet this is precisely Benjamin Abbott's confession, as made in his picturesque autobiography.

A Methodist sermon, which his wife induced him to go a dozen miles to hear, gave him "awful sensations of the future state," and set him to studying his Bible in quest of some way of escape. A little later the preacher Abraham Whitworth, a young Englishman, with a gift for touching the emotions, held meetings near the farm where Abbott worked, in Pittsgrove Township, Salem County, N J. This stirring kind of preaching attracted multitudes, Abbott among the rest. The arrow went straight to the burly farmer's heart. "I cried out for mercy," he says. "When the sermon was over the people flocked round the preacher and began to dispute with him about the principles of religion. I said there never was such preaching as this; but the people said, 'Abbott is going mad.'"

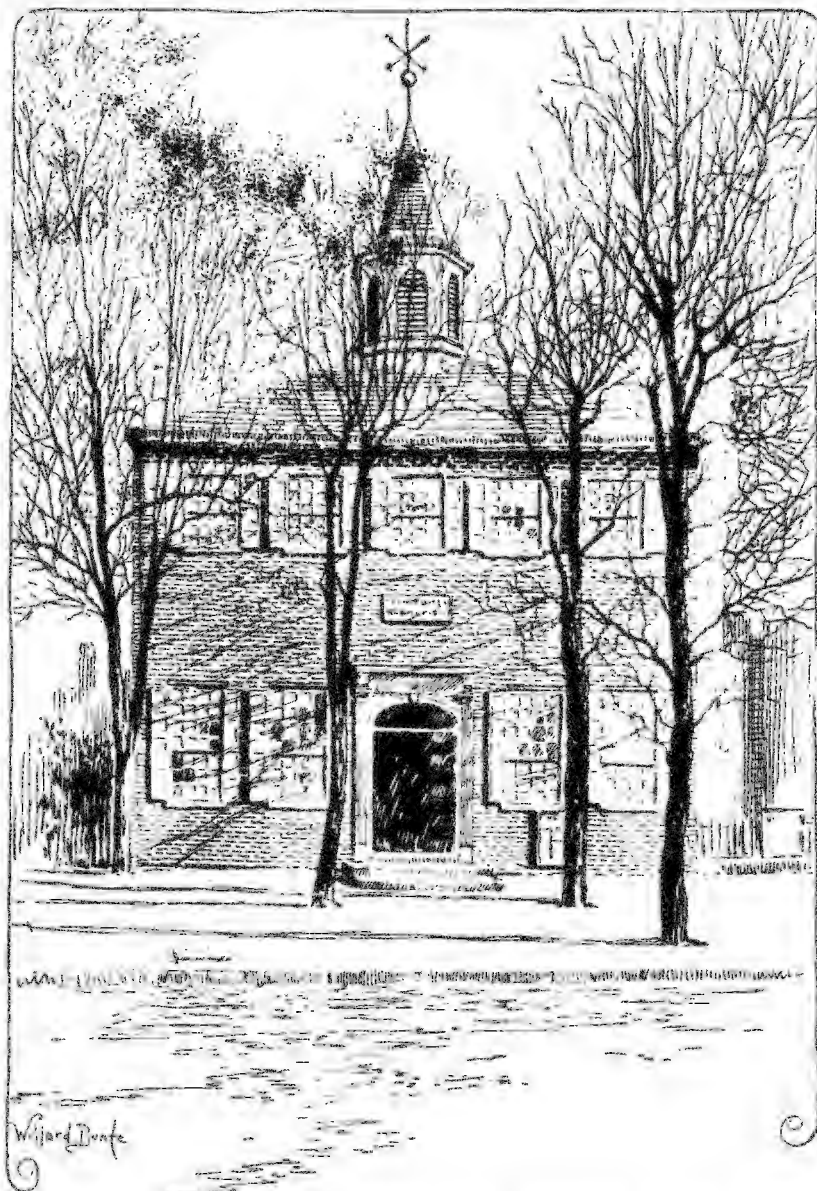
The people were amazed at the revolution. The strong man was now under deep conviction of sin, and could get no sense of pardon. Horrible dreams broke his rest. His mind was disturbed with the doctrine of election; "Satan suggested that I was one of those damned reprobates that God had assigned over to him from all eternity, and however

I might cry and pray he was sure of me at last." In despair he would have killed himself, but dread of future torment stáyed his hand. In the fields and woods he cried aloud, "God be merciful

to me a sinner!" He thought he must have died if some answer to his prayer had not come. Still he could not swallow his dinner for his distress of mind.

In his anguish he took his little son and sought a Methodist meeting. The house was crowded and many listeners stood without. The preacher's words ran through him "from head to foot" as he sat with his boy on his knee. He would have risen

and gone out, to conceal the tumult of his emotions, but his limbs had lost their power, and he cried out, "Save, Lord, or I perish!" The crowd of disputing Calvinists barred his way to the preacher after the sermon, but that



DRAWN BY G. WILLARD BONTE.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY REV. J. G. EDWARDS

THE OLD COURTHOUSE, SALEM, N. J.

Here Daniel Ruff preached the first Methodist sermon in this town.

evening, to the great joy of his good wife, he set up family prayer.

The next Sabbath the Abbotts followed the preacher to his appointment a dozen miles distant. The husband spoke to him before the sermon, told him his distress, and asked to be baptized, thinking the rite would make him better, for he had as yet no idea of pardon through faith in Christ.

“Are you a Quaker?” asked Whitworth—for he was probably the preacher mentioned.

“No,” replied Abbott, the tears streaming down his sunburned cheeks, “I am nothing but a poor, wretched, condemned sinner.”

The other opened to him the plain promise of the Gospel, “saying that I was the very man Christ died for or he would not have awakened me; that it was the greatest of sinners Christ came to save.” Mindful of his outcry on the former occasion, Abbott would not enter the preachinghouse, but, standing by the door, heard himself “prayed for particularly as a poor, broken-hearted sinner.” That night, after dreams of torment, there came a beautiful vision of the pardoning Christ, in which the Scriptures were wonderfully opened to his understanding. In the morning his troubled soul found peace.

The first impulse of the new convert was to tell his joys abroad. But his Baptist and Presbyterian neighbors could not understand his experience. Some laughed at him, and the report spread before night that Abbott was raving mad. Even his wife, though having the form of godliness, disputed his idea that none could have saving religion without knowing it, and the village dominie loaned him choice books from his Calvinistic library to dispel his “delusions of the devil.” For a moment Abbott wavered, but took to his knees by the

roadside, and his prayer of faith was answered. “I sprang to my feet,” he says, “and cried out not all the devils in hell should make me doubt; for I knew that I was converted. At that instant I was filled with unspeakable raptures of joy”

It is sad to have to relate that the evangelist whose words had saved others himself became a “castaway” Whitworth, whose zeal brought Benjamin Abbott to the way of life, soon fell a victim to intemperate habits. “Alas for that man! He had been useful,” wrote Asbury, in 1774, on hearing the lamentable news, “was puffed up, and so fell into the snares of the devil. My heart pitied him, but I fear he died a backslider.”

Abbott’s conversion, strangely enough, at first caused a difference of opinion from his wife. She could not but observe the welcome reformation in his character, but her minister assured her that, far from being born again, her husband was vainly trying to win heaven on the strength of good works. Abbott meditated day and night upon the Bible, and his dreams took the form of sermons. But when he told his wife of his conviction that he should one day be a preacher she taunted him with his uncouth looks and his ignorance of Bible truth. Nevertheless, at home and among his neighbors he continued to glorify God by his conversation not less than by his walk.

When young Philip Gatch came into New Jersey on his first preaching tour Mrs. Abbott heard him and was brought to confess her sins and receive pardon, an experience which, good Presbyterian as she was, she had never before known. Within three months the six children of the Abbotts were converted, the youngest being a child of seven years. “These were the beginning of days to us,” says Abbott. “From

this time we went on hand in hand, helping and building each other up in the Lord."

This rough-handed plowman was the first convert in New Jersey who became a preacher. That there was some reason for his wife's mockery over his preaching ability may be judged from Jesse Lee's statement that "he was a great blunderer, and his language incorrect, more so than was common;" yet so irresistible was his conviction of the power of God in Christ to forgive sin, and so earnest and imaginative his appeals, that as an evangelist he "was one of the wonders of America." At first as a class leader in his own vicinity, later as a local preacher with a wide range of appointments, and after 1789 as a traveling minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he became one of the most widely known figures throughout the Methodist Connection. His original sayings, together with the striking characteristics of his personality and work, are among the heirlooms of Methodism.

The book of the acts of this apostle of south Jersey abounds in examples of his bravery and devotion and of the strange scenes which often accompanied his preaching.

Having heard that a mob at Deerfield had a kettle of tar ready for the first Methodist preacher who should come there, Abbott felt called to go. He trembled as he gave out the hymn and sang four lines of it alone in the midst of the hostile throng. But in prayer "the power of God fell on me in such a manner that it instantly removed from me the fear of man, and some cried out." In the sermon he had "great liberty." Many of the mob shed tears, and the ringleader himself was impressed. Thus the bold Methodist escaped the threatened coat of tar.

In response to the prayer of a circuit preacher Abbott

acquired a large increase of spiritual life. After the words "Come, Lord, and sanctify me, soul and body," he declares, "The Spirit of God came upon me in such a manner that I fell flat to the floor. I had not the power to lift hand or foot, nor yet to speak one word; I believe I lay half an hour, and felt the power of God running through every part of my soul and body like fire, consuming the inward corruptions of fallen depraved nature. When I arose and walked to the door, and stood pondering these things in my heart, it appeared to me that the whole creation was praising God; it also appeared as if I had got new eyes, for everything appeared new, and I felt a love for all the creatures that God had made, and an uninterrupted peace filled my breast."

That intense experience, with its mysterious physical accompaniments, he saw many times repeated among his auditors. There were marvelous displays of emotion, and men and women "cried aloud" and "fell on the floor." The preacher's own fearful experience of the burdensomeness of sin gave him a hold upon the sinner. Men who had heard Abbott swear and seen him fight would now go, out of curiosity, to hear him preach, and would receive a dole of the living bread. Though rude of speech, as the critics judged him, no hearer misunderstood his message. On one occasion a score of listening Indians crowded around him, with tears in their eyes, inquiring what they should do to be saved. Once, when he told his own experience, a blasphemous youth, called "Swearing Jack," declared, "That man has been as bad as I, and if he has found peace, why may not I?" It was not long before the preacher heard his testimony in public: "Here stands Swearing Jack; but God has pardoned all my sins!"

Abbott's record of his preaching excursions is rich in notes

of “melting times,” “much weeping,” and “many falling to the floor.” At a quarterly meeting at Morris River “we had a powerful time; the slain lay all through the house and round it, and in the woods, crying to God for mercy; and others praising God for the deliverance of their souls.” At another appointment “the Lord made bare his arm of almighty power in such a manner that many fell to the floor; their cries were very great; the sinners sprang to the doors and windows and fell over one another in getting out; five jumped out at a window; and one woman went close by me and cried, ‘You are a devil.’ A young man cried, ‘Command the peace!’ but the magistrate answered, ‘It is the power of God.’ Another, with tears in his eyes, entreated the people to hold their peace; to which an old woman replied, ‘They cannot hold their peace unless you cut out their tongues.’”

After preaching one day to a throng of people Abbott told them that they had often heard preaching from the word of the Lord, but to come next day and hear him preach from the words of the devil. The place and the roadway were crowded with curious listeners as he announced his text: “The devil saith unto him, All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Many were cut to the heart by his words, and there was weeping throughout the great audience.

In the most troubled period of the Revolutionary War Abbott felt “pressed in spirit to visit Pennsylvania;” a perilous undertaking, for all the Methodists were reputed to be Tories and their traveling preachers were suspected of being spies of the king. Crossing the Delaware to Newcastle, he preached at nightfall to “a pack of ruffians assembled in order to mob him; one stood with a bottle of rum in his hand, swearing to throw it at the Methodist’s head. “If ever I

preached the terrors of the law," says Abbott, "I did it then." He traveled on through varying experiences. Here the Baptists fought his doctrine of free grace, there he found welcome and precious sympathy among believers who still cherished sparks of Whitefield's fire.

One incident of this campaign illustrates the coolness and bravery of this peculiar man. These are substantially his own words: "Being a stranger, I stopped at a house to inquire my way to my next appointment. The householder bade me to go along with him, for there was to be a Methodist preacher there that day, 'and our minister,' said the man, 'is to be there to trap him in his discourse.' Soon a neighbor, who was a constable, came along, and we set off. The two neighbors soon fell into conversation about the preacher, having no idea of my being the man, for I never wore a black coat. The constable swore by all his gods that he would lose his right arm if the Methodist preacher did not go to jail that day. My mind was greatly exercised, for I had not an acquaintance in the place. When we arrived at the appointment I saw about two hundred horses hitched. I retired into the woods and prayed and covenanted with God that if he stood by me through this emergency, I would be more for him, through grace, than ever I had been. I arose with a perfect resignation to the will of God, whether to death or to jail. I took my saddlebags and entered the house. The owner privately asked me to preach in favor of the war. I replied I should preach as God should direct me. My reply made him uneasy, but he went out with me and addressed the people, 'Gentlemen, this house is my own, and no gentleman shall be interrupted in my house in time of his discourse, but after he has done you may do as you please.' 'Thank God,' said I to myself, 'that I have liberty once more

to warn sinners before I die!’ I then took my stand in the crowded room, two or three feet from the constable. When he recognized me his face fell and he turned pale. I sang a hymn, none joining me. Then I knelt in prayer, and arose and preached with great liberty, until tears flowed in abundance. After preaching I told them I expected they wondered by what authority I had come into that country to preach. I then told them of my conviction and conversion; the place of my nativity and place of residence; also my call to the ministry, and that seven years I had labored in God’s vineyard; that I spent my own money and found and wore my own clothes, and that it was the love which I had for their precious souls, for whom Christ died, that had induced me to come among them at the risk of my life; and then exhorted them to fly to Jesus, the ark of safety. By this time the people were generally melted into tears. I then concluded, and appointed preaching on that day two weeks. I mounted my horse and set out. I had not gone fifty yards when I heard hallooing, and saw about fifty in pursuit. When they came up one of them said, ‘I crave your name.’ I told him, and so we parted.”

On this Pennsylvania pilgrimage an aged Presbyterian attacked Abbott’s work, especially its excitement and noise and the physical prostration of the convicted. “It was all the work of the devil;” he said “that God was a God of order—and this was a perfect confusion.” “Well,” said the Methodist, “if this be the work of the devil, these people (many of whom then lay on the floor as dead men), when they come to, will curse and swear and rage like devils; but if it be of God, their notes will be changed.” Soon after one of them revived and began to praise God with a loud voice, others soon joining in the testimony for Jesus. “Hark! hark!” said the

preacher, "do you hear? This is not the language of hell, but of Canaan!"

The next day the questioner came again and witnessed the same scenes. The third day, though the appointment was



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

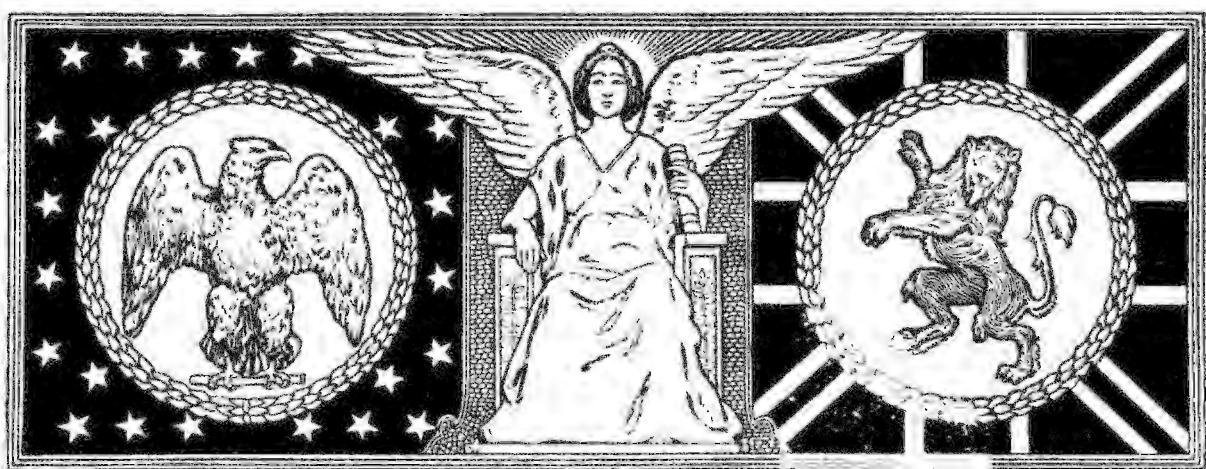
GRAVESTONE OF REV. BENJAMIN ABBOTT, SALEM, N. J.

seven miles distant, he was again present, and himself fell unconscious, like those whom he had criticised, though he said nothing when he came to himself. The fourth day the same power was manifest. Abbott, exhausted by his labors,

cried, "For God's sake, if any can speak for God, say on, for I can speak no more!" Who should arise but the aged Presbyterian, who began by saying that he was no Methodist, but he had seen enough to convince him that the power of God was present in the meetings. He followed this testimony with a warm exhortation.

On several occasions Abbott crossed the Delaware to assist his son David, who was an itinerant preacher in the Delaware and Maryland peninsula. The father's fame had preceded him, and thousands came to hear and see. The chapels were too small for his congregations, and he spoke in the forests and orchards. The physical effects of his preaching were so conspicuous in one case here that Abbott feared the sinner might die in his trance. "I concluded to go home," he says, "and not proceed one step farther, for killing people will not answer; but at last the man came to, and began to praise God."

Mrs. Abbott, faithful to the end, died in 1788, and the next spring her husband left the local ranks for the regular ministry, being then in his fifty-seventh year. For seven years Father Abbott traveled circuits in New York, New Jersey, and Maryland, upholding with much of his old energy the doctrines of justification and sanctification. About a year before his death ill health forced him to desist from regular ministerial work, though he continued to testify in public as he had opportunity. He died among loving friends at Salem, N. J., on August 14, 1796, in the sixty-fifth year of his age. The obituary notice in the Minutes of that year speaks of him with regretful tenderness and respect. He was remembered by multitudes as a typical primitive Methodist preacher, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost.



CHAPTER XVIII

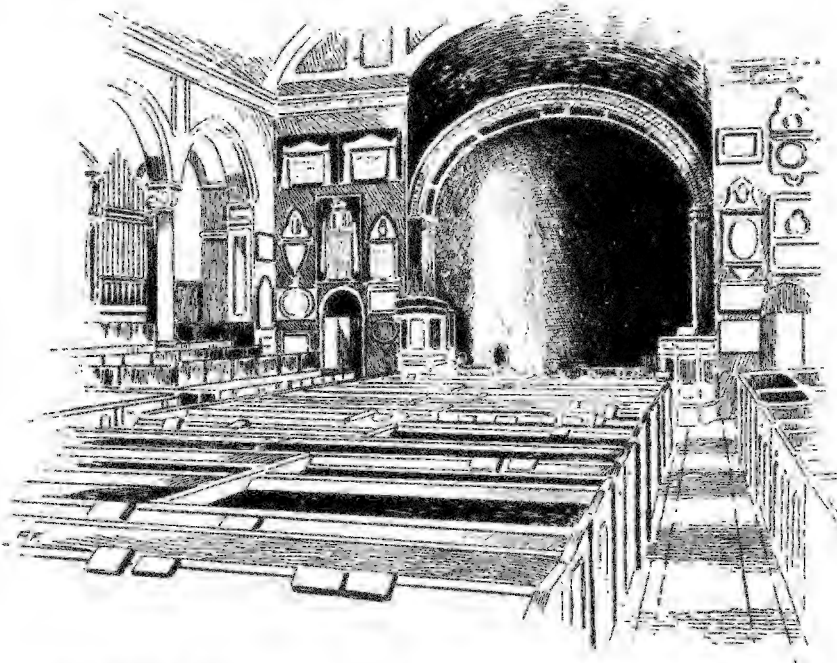
The Return of the Missionaries

THE ENGLISH EVANGELISTS.—THE WAY HEDGED UP.—ESCAPING TO ENGLAND.—CAPTAIN WEBB.—MARTIN RODDA, ROYALIST.—SHADFORD PRAYS FOR HIS KING.—THE MARYLAND "TEST OATHS."—RANKIN GIVES UP.—ASBURY WILL STAY.

THE Wesleyan missionaries came to America out of pure love of winning souls. They were bound to their native country by every tie, and when the war hedged up their opportunities of traveling and preaching they went home to England and resumed their itinerant labors under Wesley's direction.

Captain Webb, the most picturesque figure of them all, loved the souls of the Americans, and, from the very first, had spared neither time nor money in spreading the Gospel among them. But we cannot doubt that his British blood fairly boiled when the leaden statue of his king in Bowling Green was pulled over and melted down into "rebel" bullets. He had married in America, and was slow to give up his property and connections here. In the spring of 1777, however, he preached his last sermon in Baltimore. An over-zealous patriot, hearing that he was a British officer on half pay, informed against him as a spy. Webb slipped out of

town, however, and tradition says that he lay in hiding for some time at Pemberton, N. J. Eventually he reached the British lines in New York, and soon afterward returned to England. His declining years were marked by the same generous zeal for the Wesleyan cause. He preached successfully among soldiers, sailors, and prisoners of war, and gave liberally out of his modest pension to needy societies and chapel funds. He died suddenly at Bristol on December 10,



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY REV. W. H. MEREDITH

INTERIOR OF PORTLAND CHAPEL, BRISTOL,
ENGLAND.

Captain Webb is buried in the apse, and his memorial tablet is near the pulpit.

1796, and was buried in the chancel of Portland Chapel, where a portrait window and a mural tablet commemorate the sterling qualities of this Christian soldier: "Brave, active, courageous, faithful, zealous, successful."

Martin Rodda did more than any other English preacher to spoil the good name of his American flock. His action in circulating the king's proclamation in Maryland was perhaps no more than a loyal Briton felt bound to do for his sovereign, but it was directly opposed to Wesley's exhortations to neutrality, and was an indiscretion which ended his usefulness here. Rodda would scarcely have escaped with a whole skin had not faithful negro slaves smuggled him on board a British ship.

Thus he made his escape to Philadelphia, and thence to England.

There was not a more inoffensive and peace-loving man in the itinerancy than George Shadford, the leading spirit in the great awakening in Virginia. Yet the war did not spare him. "They threatened me with imprisonment," he says, "when I prayed for the king; they took me up and examined me and pressed me to take the test oath to renounce him forever." This was in Virginia. The next year this conscientious man labored on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and was confronted with the ironclad oath of that State. "I was brought to a strait; I had sworn allegiance to the king twice [Shadford had been a soldier in his youth] and could not swear to renounce him forever. I dare not play with fast and loose oaths and swallow them in such a manner. We could not travel safe without a pass, nor have a pass without taking the oaths." At the next quarterly meeting he met Asbury. "Let us have a day of fasting and prayer," said Shadford, "that the Lord may direct us; for we were never in such circumstances as now since we were Methodist ministers." Their prayers were diversely answered. Asbury felt called to stay. Shadford "had it as much impressed upon his mind to go home as it had once been to come to America." They parted in tears, not to meet again on earth.

With a fellow-preacher Shadford presented himself before General Smallwood. They told their story. They were British subjects and inoffensive Methodist preachers. Their work was done. "We cast ourselves wholly upon your generosity," pleaded they, "and hope, as you profess to be fighting for your liberties, you will grant us a pass to have liberty to return to our own land in peace."

"Now you have done us all the hurt you can you want to go home!" said the general, who evidently had his own opinion of Methodist itinerants.

But they soon convinced him of their innocence and ob-



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY REV. W. H. MEREDITH.

THE WEBB MEMORIAL WINDOW IN PORTLAND CHAPEL, BRISTOL, ENGLAND.

The portrait of Webb on glass was in the basement of the original chapel, and is in one of the principal windows of the present structure.

tained the desired safe-conducts. They reached Philadelphia with difficulty, having, with their saddlebags on their backs, crossed one long dismantled bridge by crawling along the stringpieces. The city was in British hands, and other Methodist refugees were there. In the spring of 1778 the

two preachers set sail for the old country. "I felt a very thankful heart," says Shadford, "when I set my foot on English ground in a land of peace and liberty, where was no alarm of war and bloodshed. They who have never been sick do not know the value of health."

In England Shadford continued to labor with the same steady devotion. He was a grave and earnest preacher, and his power in prayer was exceptional, evoking waves of feeling which sometimes swept great congregations in such way as his sermons seldom did. His triumphant deathbed utterances and his last words, "I'll praise," thrice repeated, were often on the lips of the Methodist fathers.

Stevens pays this just tribute to this private soldier in the itinerant ranks: "Shadford excelled any other of Wesley's American missionaries in immediate usefulness. His ardor kindled the societies with zeal. He was the chief 'revivalist' of the times—a man of tender feelings, warmest piety, and wonderful unction in the pulpit."

One of the unnamed refugees who quitted America with Shadford in the spring of 1778 was, probably, Thomas Rankin, who had come out with him in 1773 to superintend the American societies, and who now abandoned the "rebels" to the fortunes of war.

Rankin saw in the war a chastisement from God for sin, and he made no secret of his views. "From the first day of my coming here," he wrote in his Journal in 1774, "it has always been impressed on my mind that God has a controversy with the inhabitants of the British colonies. It will be seen shortly whether my fears and views were properly founded or not." Notes of the gathering gloom become frequent in his Journal. On the fast day appointed by the Continental Congress in July, 1775, Rankin preached to the

people on the causes of the prevailing distress, telling them that the sins of Great Britain and her colonies had long called aloud for vengeance.

At a quarterly meeting in Virginia in 1776 the militia marched up to seize the superintendent and his fellow-preachers. But in spite of others' fears the members prayed and Rankin preached as if no soldiers were present. "A cry went through all the people and some of the officers as well as many of the soldiers trembled where they stood." "God forbid," said an officer, "that we should hurt one hair of such a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Rankin had already determined to resign his commission and return to England. The other English preachers, except Asbury, were of one mind. The Conference of 1777, which was held "at a preachinghouse near Deer Creek, in Harford County, Md., on May 20," broke up with deep feeling, many supposing "they should not see the faces of the English preachers any more." Two months later Asbury heard his superior preach his last sermon in America, and it made him both heartsick and homesick. In September Rankin left Maryland, "and through divers dangers got safe into" the British lines in Philadelphia. He sailed in the spring of the year, and in June, 1778, to his "unspeakable happiness," was again among his dear friends in London.

"We are left alone," said Shadford to Asbury, after Rankin dropped out of the work in September, 1777, and when the faithful Shadford turned to go, a little later, Asbury was alone indeed. From the first his purpose was fixed to stay in the work into which the Lord had so plainly led him. Ever since the earliest mutterings of the tempest he had jealously kept himself clear of partisanship. His single business here was to lead souls to Christ. In the last days of

April, 1775, he found Baltimore "inflamed with a martial spirit" which he trusted God would "overrule." It was soon after this that, having heard of the decision of his brethren to retire, he made his famous resolve not to abandon "such a field for gathering souls to Christ."

As for "the three thousand souls who desire to commit themselves to our care," he nobly declares, "I am determined by the grace of God not to leave them, let the consequence be what it may "

This resolution never wavered. The warlike preparations at Norfolk only warned him "to watch and fight against sin and Satan."

When the Baltimoreans were alarmed, in the spring of 1776, by the rumor of the approach of a British war ship he exclaimed: "Alas for fallen man! He fears his fellow-creatures, whose breath is in their nostrils, but fears not him who is able to destroy body and soul in hell." Of himself he repeated: "My desire is to live in love and peace with all men, to do them no harm, but all the good I can. . . . I can leave all the little affairs of this confused world



FROM THE COPPERPLATE BY HOPWOOD.

LORD NORTH.

to those men to whose province they pertain, and can go comfortably on my proper business of instrumentally saving my own soul and those that hear me." The rumors of battles and slaughter gave him some concern, but he knew the Americans too well to expect a British triumph. "What can they expect to accomplish," he exclaims, "without an army of two or three hundred thousand men? and even then there would be but little prospect of their success."

Reports occasionally came to him that this and that brother were quitting the field, yet he could never once read his duty in that light. His plain mission was to stay, and, having done all, to stand.

To Benson, in England, Asbury expressed "the general language of the American people and preachers, that those preachers from Europe who were dissatisfied with the measures of the country had better go home." Though he made no comment on public policies, he could not suppress a regret at the departure of his colleagues. When, at the Conference of 1777, tears were flowing over the first parting he was "willing to commit the matter to the Lord." The others might go, but "I leave myself in the hand of God," he writes.

When the storm was at its height, and Asbury was alone, he wrote: "I was under some heaviness of mind. But it was no wonder—three thousand miles from home—my friends have left me; I am considered by some as an enemy of the country; every day liable to be seized by violence and abused. However," concludes this unique soul, "all this is but a trifle to suffer for Christ and the salvation of souls. Lord, stand by me!" And the Lord was with him, so that he could soon say, "We have great commotions on every side. But in the midst of war the Lord keeps my soul in peace."

The "preposterously rigid" test oath which the Maryland



From an Original print in possession of J.P.D. in Eng.

CAPTAIN THEO: WEBB

of the British Army

One of the first Methodist Preachers in America.

authorities exacted of the clergy silenced Asbury in that State in 1778 and 1779, because he could not conscientiously swear to all its provisions. The Delaware laws were less exacting, and in 1780 Asbury became a citizen of that State. When the war was over he was among the first to accept its



FROM THE COPPERPLATE BY HOPWOOD.

KING GEORGE THE THIRD.

results. He had long foreseen—apparently with satisfaction—the outcome of the war. He had believed that the future greatness of Methodism was bound up with the independence of America. From the dawn of peace to the sunset of his own laborious life every faculty of this remarkable man was concentrated in an effort to win the opening continent for the cause of his Church and its divine Master.

Francis Asbury has become one of the most illustrious names in our religious history. Methodists venerate him as the second founder of their Church, and Christian patriots of every name no longer deny his great services in keeping Christian civilization abreast of the waves of population which swept westward in the first three decades of the republic. The Staffordshire mechanic well deserves his belated honors, but let us not forget the years of trial which prefaced the triumph. His fellow-missionaries had sadly turned away from this distracted country. His English and Loyalist friends had no sympathy with his neutrality. The Americans eyed him with suspicion and threatened violence. He endured all as seeing that which is invisible, and his reward is sure.



CHAPTER XIX

In the Midst of Alarms

REPLACING THE ENGLISH MISSIONARIES. — A FORETASTE OF PERSECUTION.
—THE BAPTISTS. — OUTRAGES IN MARYLAND. — TAR AND FEATHERS
FOR GATCH. — HARTLEY IN TALBOT JAIL. — CHEW. — GARRETTSON'S
EXPERIENCES.

THE return of the English preachers threw the American societies upon their own resources. That marvelous training school for Christian workers, the British Wesleyan Conference, whose graduates had carried forward the work so well begun by Webb, Strawbridge, and Embury, was closed against America by the war. To fill the vacancies caused by these withdrawals, and to supply the beseeching cry for more preachers that came up from almost every circuit, scores of young men were thrust out untrained and inexperienced into the harvest field. They came from the towns of the North and from the plantations of the South, and some of them were wearing the Continental blue and buff when they heard and obeyed the call, "Go, work." There were many whose opportunities for education had been very slight, yet one thing they all knew—that they had been saved from their sins—and they were intensely eager to lead others into the same joyful experience. And one thing they could tell—that this salvation was free to all men. Such doctrine,

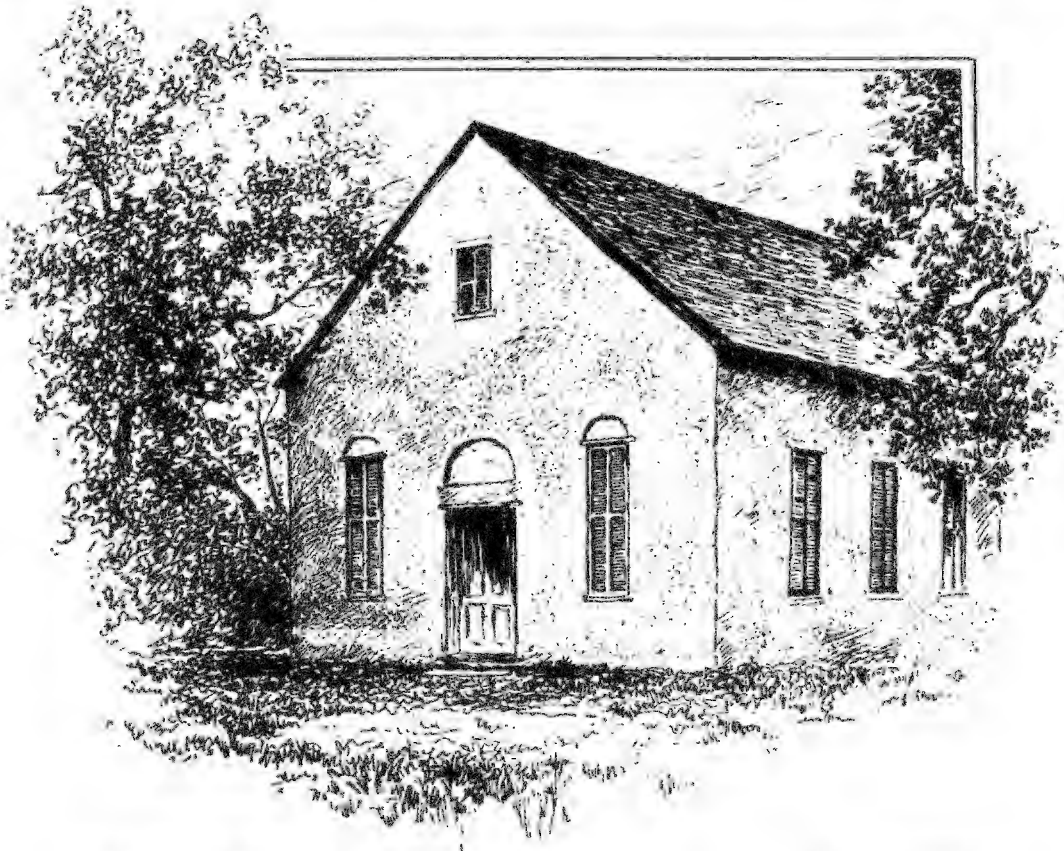
simple and blessed as it was, was rarely heard in the churches, and was even denounced as heresy from many scholarly pulpits. But it was bread from heaven to hungry people who had been fed so long on the husks of predestinarian theology that many of them had come to believe that religion was a creed to dispute about rather than a life to live. They received the old gospel of free grace eagerly from the itinerant plowboys and mechanics who succeeded the Wesleyan missionaries.

Had there not been a Providential purpose to preserve Methodism for its great future, the struggling societies could hardly have survived this period of storm and stress: bereft at a single stroke of almost every skilled laborer, soon to be cut off from the advice and direction of the patriarch Wesley by his death, its Conference recruited with young men of small education and no experience, its councils brought to the verge of disruption by internal dissension, its patriotism aspersed, and its members branded as Tories and subjected in some cases to foul and violent usage. Certainly these are they who have come up out of great tribulation.

The Methodist itinerants had their first taste of persecution before the war hedged them with enemies. Wicked men, whose sins they had rebuked, plotted evil against them; zealots of the older sects resisted their efforts to make converts in their "preserves," and in more instances than one the tithe-taking rectors and clerks of the parishes resented the Methodist invasion, and either led or connived at the riotous attempts to suppress it. Broad-minded Presbyterian and Lutheran ministers there were who welcomed the Methodists as their fellow-preachers of righteousness, but in general there was a disposition on the part of the clergy of the older denominations to engage the Methodist preachers

in argument upon the doctrines of Calvinism or the peculiar tenet of the Baptists, or outcry was raised against extemporaneous praying and unwritten sermons.

Thomas Ware, who was bred among the New Jersey Presbyterians, told Asbury that he first heard of Wesley as a man who "had brought scandal upon the Christian world



DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

HOLDEN'S MEETINGHOUSE, QUEEN ANNE CO., MD.

One of the oldest in the State. Said to have been built in 1775.

by preaching up free will." "Free will?" said I. "And what would you have him preach? Bound will? He might as well go with the Romish saint and preach to fish as preach to men without will!"

The Baptists interfered with Benjamin Abbott's work in the same State. "They led my sheep into the water," he said. Freeborn Garrettson encountered them in Delaware, where they "greatly hindered" his progress by "drawing

off a few and setting others to disputing about the decrees and their method of baptizing." At another place a "Nicolite" preacher taught that it was sinful to wear dyed or trimmed garments or to sing; consequently many had taken the borders off their caps, while others thought the Methodist in danger of hell fire because he wore a black coat. "Baby sprinkler" was the pleasing epithet which certain Baptist preachers kept for those who dissented from their theory of infant baptism. "Like ghosts they haunt us everywhere," wrote Asbury. Against Jarratt and a few other friendly clergymen might be ranged a long list of parish ministers who opposed the Methodists, forbade them to preach in their parishes, and winked at or openly instigated the riotous outbreaks against them.

The worldly life of the average Church of England rector in Maryland and Virginia offered a fair mark for the homely wit of the apostolic itinerant whom he tried to silence, and some of these fine gentlemen suffered severely in the strife of tongues. In Norfolk, then a seaport of unsavory reputation, a clergyman preached against the Methodists from the text, "Be not righteous overmuch," to which the Methodist is said to have responded with great point from a text of his own, "Be not wicked overmuch." An Anglican minister in Dorchester County, Md., served notice upon Asbury that he had full authority over the souls in his parish, but Asbury had the impertinence to preach and form a society under his eyes. In Queen Anne County a clergyman brought out an old law against unlicensed preaching places, which the preacher, Watters, evaded by holding a conventicle in the open air which resulted in the formation of a Methodist society.

To all these forms of annoying opposition the Methodists were liable as soon as their aggressive methods began to be

apparent to the older religious bodies. But these, and even the cruel practical jokes and displays of violence by the godless and vicious who were angered at the preacher's denunciation of immorality, were experiences which any Methodist preacher might reasonably expect. It was the war of the Revolution that put these men on their mettle.

The lawless period of the war, with its popular outcry against the Tories, licensed every enemy of the Methodists to lift his hand against them. Their plight was worst of all in Maryland. The people had been excited by the injudicious acts of one or two of the English preachers who sought to do the American cause such harm as they might before leaving the country. Some of the most inoffensive of the American itinerants had to suffer for their brethren's misdeeds. The magistrates bowed to the popular prejudice. Some of the preachers were fined, others bound over to silence, others thrown into the wretched county jails, others still were beaten with rods, or tarred and feathered, without the pretense of a trial.

In Sussex County, Va., Philip Gatch, while traveling peaceably along the highway, was attacked by two men, who seized his arms and twisted them violently, "causing a torture like the rack." He had already worn a coat of Maryland tar and feathers, and had been treated to shameful buffetings and insults. He was in feeble health, and his friends deemed it necessary to form a bodyguard about him; "but in the hour of danger," he says, "my fears always vanished."

Young Joseph Hartley's outrages had a dramatic sequel. He had suffered much at the hands of the magistrates on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and finally, having been beaten with many stripes, was lodged in Talbot County jail. He

enlivened the hours of his durance by preaching through the gratings of his prison house to the curious crowd attracted by such a spectacle. The heart of the magistrate who had committed him was softened, he acknowledged his error, and during his last illness summoned Hartley to his bedside and begged his pardon, praised his faith, and begged him to preach at his funeral. A preacher named Chew had a somewhat similar experience. A Maryland magistrate had sent him to jail because he had scruples against taking the test oath. This oath of allegiance to the new government bound those who took it to bear arms, if need be, and as the Methodist preachers generally were noncombatants from principle they could not conscientiously take the oath. The sheriff had too much respect for his prisoner to lock him up, preferring to keep him under proper safeguards in his own—the sheriff's—residence. The sheriff's wife was so impressed by the words and demeanor of the man that she became a Christian, and was a liberal supporter of the Methodists.

The experience of the dauntless young man Freeborn Garrettson, soon to be a great figure in Methodism, is that of a Methodist preacher who loved his country, but was forced into a false position by his scruples. In Virginia, in 1777, the oath of allegiance to the State was presented to him. Many Methodist patriots subscribed it, but his statement of the reasons for his refusal explains the feelings of those who could not: 1 He did not believe in swearing. 2. A preacher had no time for war.

The magistrate thereupon warned him to leave the State, to which Garrettson replied that the Conference had sent him there and he must obey. “Then go to jail,” said the authorities. “Surely Daniel's God will defend my cause,” said the brave preacher, and no one molested him.

Garrettson's Journal of these times is full of incidents which illustrate the partisan madness of which the Methodists were the victims. At one place a mob "of the best people" came to the house where the preacher lodged and dragged his host down stairs and around the town "until his arms were as black as ink;" but the spy who attended preaching to get evidence against the preacher was so powerfully affected that his report sent the rioters to their homes. "() who would not confide in so good a God!" exclaims the young itinerant. At another time Garrettson tells us: "I was pursued by a party of men who waylaid me, and the head of the company, with a gun presented, commanded me to stop. Several of the women who were with us surprised me; they were in an instant off their horses, and, seizing hold of his gun, held it until I passed by. I am not surprised at the devil's rattling his chains, for his kingdom is coming down very fast." This preacher did not always come off scatheless. In Queen Anne County, Md., he was beaten with clubs, and in Cambridge, Dorchester County, was imprisoned.

On entering Dover, Del., in 1778, Garrettson was surrounded by a mob of hundreds of excited citizens, who cried out against him as "one of King George's men;" others declared he was one of the gang of Tories.* Garrettson was threatened with lynching. A friendly merchant spoke for fair play, and gained a hearing for the young man. In a voice which, he tells us, could be heard a quarter of a mile Garrettson preached from the words, "If it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Every window within earshot was full of heads, and many were touched by the sermon.

* Chauncey Clowe, an ex-Methodist, had rallied a company of three hundred Loyalists in Kent County, Del. It was dispersed, however, and its leader executed. A careful inquiry is said to have shown that there were but two Methodists in the entire company.

On the occasion of a large quarterly meeting in Virginia in 1777 a local magistrate, who could hardly believe that such an assemblage of Methodists had no political significance,

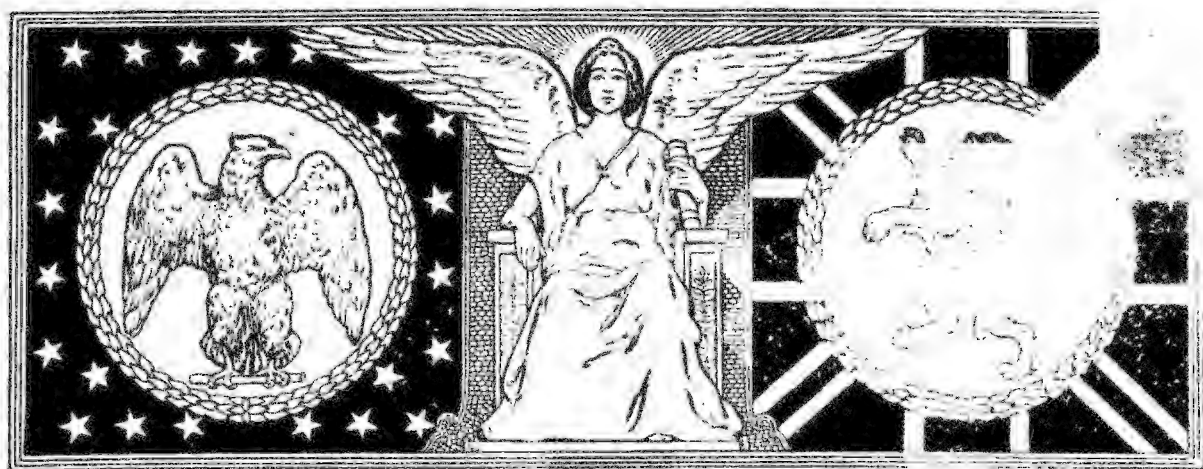


FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

DORCHESTER COUNTY JAIL, CAMBRIDGE, MD.

Where young Freeborn Garrettson was imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel.

appeared and interrupted the services. William Watters, who was in charge of the service, saved the people from further annoyance by taking the test oath, which, as his patriotism was not cumbered with noncombatant principles, he could easily do.



CHAPTER XX

The Gospel of Peace in Time of War

JESSE LEE IN THE ARMY.—THE METHODIST'S TRIUMPH.—BETWEEN TWO FIRES,—ASBURY'S DUMB SABBATHS.—HIDING IN SWAMPS.—ASBURY'S "GOOD NEWS."—THREE DELAWARE LAYMEN.—WAR NOTES IN THE MINUTES.—THE SOCIETY IN NEW YORK.

JESSE LEE, afterward New England's Methodist apostle, had scarcely begun to preach in North Carolina in 1780 when he was drafted for the Continental army. His account of the whole matter is interesting: "My mind was settled; as a Christian and as a preacher of the Gospel I could not fight. I could not reconcile it to myself to bear arms or to kill one of my fellow-creatures." He was taken to camp, but would not touch his musket. With an equally unwarlike Baptist recruit he was placed under guard. The two prayed together, and appointed a prayer service at dawn. "Before sunrise," says Lee, "I was up and began to sing; some hundreds soon assembled and joined with me, and we made the plantation ring with the songs of Zion." Prayers followed. Lee "wept much and prayed loud, and many of the poor soldiers also wept." Some who heard that loud prayer called for preaching, and, mounting a bench, this youth, who had shortly before been bewailing his diffidence,

took the text, "Except ye repent, and believe, ye shall all likewise perish." The privates in the ranks were much moved, and the colonel treated him with respect. "I told him," Lee continues, "that I could not kill a man with a good conscience, but I was a friend to my country, and was willing to do anything I could while I continued with the army, except fight." He was detailed to drive a baggage wagon, and messed with the cook, likewise a Methodist. During his four months of service Lee served as volunteer chaplain, in which capacity he won the confidence of his comrades and turned many hearts to the Lord.

Richard Ivey, or Ivy, who joined Conference in 1778, had once to preach in West Jersey, near the quarters of a body of American troops. They had vowed vengeance on the next "Methodist Tory" who should pass that way. A cordon of soldiers was drawn around his preaching place, and two officers with drawn swords seated themselves in front of him. The intrepid itinerant was master of the occasion. He exhorted his hearers to fear "neither foreign nor domestic tyranny," glancing significantly at the bare steel. Then, baring his breast, he addressed the officers: "Sirs, I would fain show you my heart. If it beats not high for legitimate liberty, may it forever cease to beat!" His action and words thrilled his congregation. The swords rattled back into their scabbards, and from the soldiers listening at the windows burst the ringing cheer, "Hurrah for the Methodist parson!"

From 1776 to 1780 Asbury was between two fires. As an Englishman he was suspected by the Americans of being the secret ally of their foe, while his former associates and countrymen blamed him for consorting with rebels.

In the first years of the war his feeble health gave way

under the strain of excessive travel over rough roads and long journeys, and he went to the mineral springs at Bath, in northwestern Virginia, for one of the rare "vacations" in his busy life. Here he remained upward of a month. During these days his "little employments" were "to read about one hundred pages a day [Christian biography chiefly]; usually to pray in public five times a day; to preach in the open air every other day; and to lecture in prayer meeting every evening." His house at the springs was twenty by sixteen feet "and there are seven beds and sixteen persons therein, and some noisy children. So I dwell among briars and thorns, but my soul is at peace."

Before 1778, when the feeling against the Methodists culminated, Asbury had discovered that he must remain in America at his peril. In one place he was arrested and fined £5 "for preaching the Gospel;" at another a bullet was fired at him, but missed its mark. Better intended, but equally menacing to the future of Methodism, was the invitation which came to him to settle as pastor of a parish church. The stirring spirit that had fought from the first for "a circulation of the preachers" was not to be tempted to "settle." He declared: "Nothing shall separate me from the brethren. I hope to live and die a Methodist."

In the winter of 1777-78 the middle colonies continued full of rumors of Clowe's regiment of Methodist Tories, of Rodda's perfidy in scattering the king's proclamation on his circuit, and of one of Rankin's last sermons in Philadelphia, when he prophesied that God's work would not revive until the rebellious spirit of America was subdued. It became hazardous for a Methodist preacher to show himself, and when even the native itinerants were not exempt from maltreatment the peril of Asbury may be imagined. Shut out

of Maryland and Virginia because he could not take their test oaths requiring him to bear arms if called upon, he remained for a year in "the Delaware State," as he calls it. Most of the time he was harbored by Judge Thomas White, one of the sturdiest of the early friends of Methodism. For three months of this time he was obliged to be very circumspect, and four or five of these Sundays were the "dumb Sabbaths," whose loss grieved him sorely. When it was unsafe for him to speak in public he addressed little companies of the faithful in private dwellings. In March, 1778, we find him applying himself closely to his Greek and Latin studies. "But this," he adds, "is not to me like preaching the Gospel. However, when a man cannot do what he would he must do what he can." Besides his studies he "spent some time in instructing the children," and intended "to lecture frequently in the family "

His presence in the White household brought suspicion upon its head, and the judge was arrested by the light-horse patrol for aiding the enemies of America. Five days later Asbury himself fled from the shelter of that hospitable roof, and took refuge in the swamps, where his condition reminded him of "some of the old prophets, who were concealed in times of public distress." Another friend took him to his home and cared for him, but he lamented sadly that he must still be dumb. "I must sit down and weep," he exclaims on Good Friday, "when I remember Zion and the years of God's right hand!" It was not until July that he could "lay a plan to travel and preach nine days in two weeks, one step toward my former regularity in what appears to me as my duty, my element, and my delight." In 1779 he took the oath of allegiance in Delaware. The feeling against him had been quieted, it is said, by the circulation

of a letter which he had written to Rankin a year or two earlier, predicting the independence of the American nation and declaring his determination to cast in his lot with it.

On Friday, May 11, 1782, at Culpeper Court House, Va., Asbury heard

"the good news that Britain had acknowledged the independence for which America has been contending "

He adds: " May it be so! The Lord does what to him seemeth good."

Almost a year later the report was confirmed, whereupon the thoughtful itinerant "had various exercises of mind." "It may cause changes to take place among us," he wrote,

"some for the better and some for the worse. It

may make against the work of God; our preachers will be far more likely to settle in the world; and our people, by getting into trade and acquiring wealth, may drink into its spirit." Thus he meditated while men of more



FROM AN ENGRAVING BY HAMILTON, 1786.

THE SURRENDER OF CORNWALLIS.

earthly minds were "firing their cannons and rejoicing in their way."

Asbury's enforced residence in Delaware brought him into close contact and friendship with some of the best men of the State. Dr. McGaw, the generous rector at Dover, loved the preacher and approved his work, while the names of three friendly laymen—White, Bassett, and Barratt—hold a permanent place in Methodist history.

Thomas White, the Kent County judge who opened his house to the hunted evangelist, owed his interest in the Methodists to his excellent wife, Mary, a worthy companion of Prudence Gough and Barbara Heck in the immortal roll of Methodist women. They had been "Church people" until Mrs. White learned the Methodist way and brought her husband into it. He soon "had the preaching at his house" before the chapel known as "White's" was built. During the black years of the war he suffered much in and out of jail for his sympathy with the "Tory Methodists," but continued steadfast. At his death, in 1795, Asbury wrote: "The news was an awful shock to me. I have met with nothing like it in the death of any friend on the continent. I have lived days, weeks, and months in his house. He was among my very best friends." Lednum well says, "In moral worth Judge White had no superior in his day—his house and hands were always open to relieve the needy."

To the mansion of the Whites came one day the lawyer, Richard Bassett, always a welcome guest. Catching sight of some strangers, he asked of Mrs. White, "Who are these black-coats?"

"O, those are some of the best men in the world," said she. "They are Methodist preachers."

"Then I cannot stay here to-night," said the lawyer.

"You must stay," urged the hostess. "They cannot hurt you."

So Bassett stayed and found so much in Asbury to admire that he invited him to his own home in Dover. The acquaintance thus opened ripened rapidly. He and his wife



DRAWN BY WARREN B. DAVIS FROM THE MINIATURE BY ST. MEMIN.

HON. RICHARD BASSETT, OF DELAWARE.

Judge, member of United States Constitutional Convention, governor, senator.

became staunch supporters of Methodism in Delaware. Bassett was an eminent lawyer, one of the framers of the Constitution of the United States, governor of the State, and senator of the United States, but he was not above preaching in the Methodist societies. The "old log Bethesda Chapel," on his estate at Bohemia Manor, was the scene of great outpourings of grace in those early days. Asbury spoke of

Bassett as his "long-loved friend." He died in 1815, and the famous preachers, Henry Boehm and Ezekiel Cooper, conducted the funeral services.

The name of Judge Barratt also appears in Asbury's Journals as one who befriended him and his cause when in sore need. His name has come down to us in connection with "Barratt's Chapel," which he built for the Methodists; for in this unpretentious structure Thomas Coke, of England, and Francis Asbury, of America, the designated bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, first met face to face and in the full tide of their emotion kissed each other.

The printed Minutes of the Conferences of the war period reflect but dimly the turmoil of the time. In 1775 a fast day was appointed "for the prosperity of the work and for the peace of America." Similar fasts were appointed in the two following years. The seventh question in 1777 was, "As the present distress is such, are the preachers resolved to take no step to detach themselves from the work of God for the ensuing year?" This was answered with an emphatic affirmative.

In 1778 the public fast was set for the last Friday of August. In 1779, "it being unadvisable for Brother Asbury and Brother Ruff, with some others, to attend in Virginia," the northern preachers met with Asbury in Delaware.

The Conference of 1783 appointed two days of public thanksgiving "for our public peace."

The adversity which beset the Methodist cause during the war adds an interest to the scanty statistics of membership as given in the printed Minutes of the Conferences. The totals by years are as follows: 1775, 3,148; 1776, 4,921; 1777, 6,968; 1778, 6,095; 1779, 8,577; 1780, 8,504; 1781, 10,539; 1782, 11,785; 1783, 13,740. In nine years the membership

had twice doubled, and in two years only is a slight loss noted! Some of the more exposed circuits reveal greater fluctuations. Thus, New York fell from 200 in 1775 to 132 in 1776, and to 96 in 1777, and was not reported again until the



PHOTOGRAPH, 1900, BY A. W. QUIMBY.

BARRATT'S CHAPEL, SIDE VIEW.

The oldest Methodist chapel in Delaware, and one of the oldest in America. It is situated near Frederica, Del.

British evacuation, which took with it many sympathizers. In 1784 the membership stood at 60, besides 24 in the new circuit of "Long Island." Between 1773 and 1779 Philadelphia lost more than half its members, and New Jersey declined from 300 to 150. At the close of the war the great body of American Methodists was to be found in Virginia and in the States immediately adjacent. Of Methodist success in these regions William Watters, one of its factors,

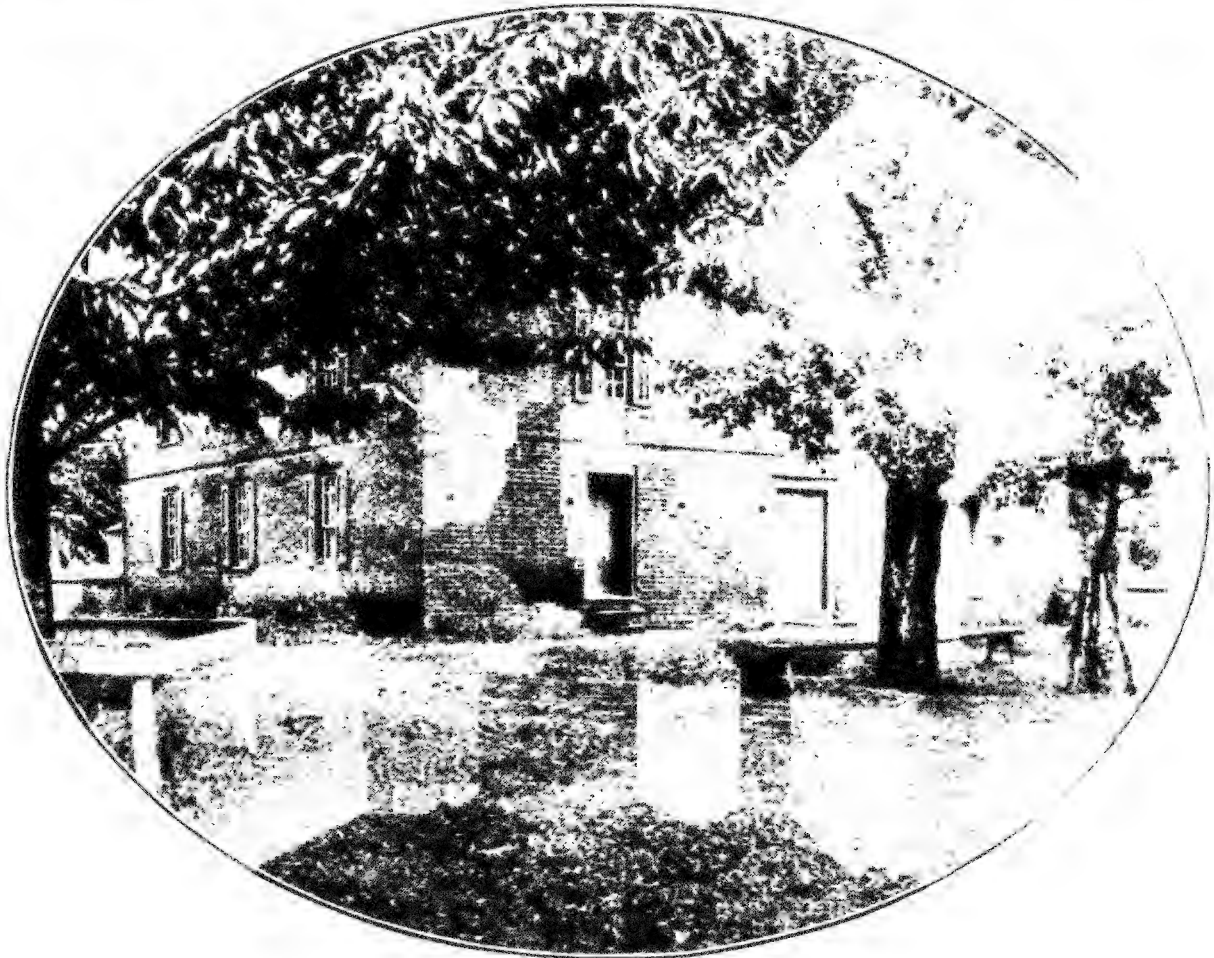
wrote, "It is not more astonishing than true that the work continued to spread in all those parts where we had preachers to labor, and I doubt whether at any time before or since it has been more genuine among us than during the war "

In the list of Conference appointments for 1777 "New York" is left blank; the chapel for which Barbara Heck had prayed and Embury had labored was left unsupplied. Manhattan Island was then and until the close of the war occupied by British troops. Of the Christian churches few were spared; some became barracks, one a prison, in others cavalry were stabled; but the Wesley Chapel seems to have been spared any worse indignity than being assigned to the Hessians for worship on Sunday mornings. The Methodists had the use of this one chapel at other times, and, though severed from the connection and without recognition by the Conference, services were regularly maintained on the Wesleyan plan. In fact, the sum paid to the preacher, \$300 a year—the largest salary thus far paid in Methodism—shows that the war-time collections in New York must have been unusually good.

John Mann, a native Gothamite, and a local preacher whom Boardman had brought into the fold, took up the work when Daniel Ruff, the Conference preacher, found New York getting uncomfortable, in the battle summer of 1776. Two years later Samuel Spraggs, an Englishman who had ceased to itinerate in America, arrived in New York and took charge, Mann continuing as his helper until the evacuation, when with other Loyalists he migrated to Nova Scotia. Spraggs served the society in John Street until the peace, and was afterward for some time a minister of a Protestant Episcopal parish in Elizabeth, N J.

The Methodist meetings in New York did not go scot free,

though less molested than the Presbyterians and Lutherans about them. Skylarking soldiers occasionally strolled in to play tricks on the pious worshipers. Old Methodists long told with relish how one rollicking squad of redcoats, who



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY A. W. QUIMBY.

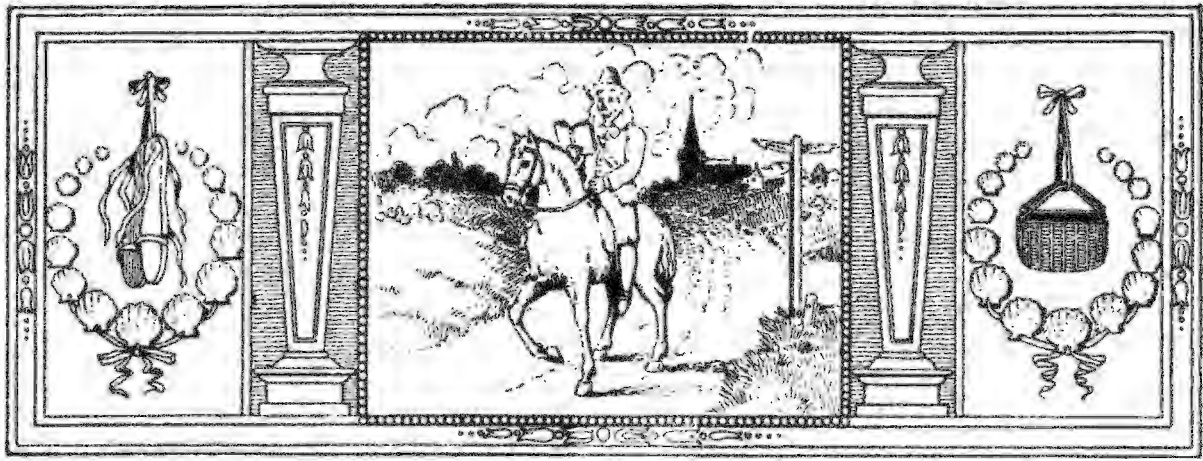
BARRATT'S CHAPEL IN 1900, FRONT VIEW.

bawled out, "God save great George, our king!" in the midst of the service, were drowned out by the lusty Methodist chorus, "Come, thou Almighty King." On another occasion a party of revelers forced an entrance into a watch night service. An officer clad in a devil disguise—cow-skin with horns painted red, and a long tail—was preparing to enter the pulpit, when two muscular brethren unceremoniously put him out of the chapel. Lednum affirms that General Howe

stationed a guard before the place to prevent the repetition of such indecencies.

While the British occupied Philadelphia they seized "the Methodist cathedral," old St. George's, where the first Conference had been held, and used it for a riding school. The Methodists were allowed to use the Baptist church on La-grange Place.

The Revolution dispersed some societies and crippled others by silencing the English preachers and throwing obstacles in the way of the American itinerants. Yet it was not unmingled with blessing. Its alarm and bloodshed helped the preachers to arouse men's souls to their desperate condition without Christ; it hurried into the itinerant ministry some of the choicest young Americans of that generation; it gave an impetus to travel and migration which in another quarter of a century had settled an empire west of the Alleghanies; but, most important of all, it broke the organic connection between the Methodists of England and America, and prepared the way for the organization, under new and favorable conditions, of an independent Church in the new-born American republic.



CHAPTER XXI

Preachers—or Ministers?

THE SACRAMENTAL CONTROVERSY.—WESLEY'S DEMANDS.—CONDITIONS IN AMERICA.—STRAWBRIDGE BAPTIZES.—FLIGHT OF THE CLERGY.—“SHALL WE BE MINISTERS?”—AN OPEN BREACH.—ASBURY'S LEADERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGED.—THE BREACH CLOSED.

FROM 1777 to 1781 the American Methodists, harassed by political enemies, fell prey to an internal dissension which, but for the iron will of Francis Asbury, must have ended in disaster. This may be called the Sacramental Controversy. It grew naturally out of the difficulty of fitting a British institution to American conditions, and must have come up in due course of time, but it was the war that suddenly made it a vital issue.

Until the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at the Christmas Conference in 1784, the Methodist societies in America had no ecclesiastical standing whatever. They were mere associations for the improvement of their members in spiritual life. They had preaching places in dwellings and barns, and had even erected buildings for their especial use. But these modest and spireless chapels were used only as preachinghouses, and were rarely dignified by the name of “church.” The untiring evangelists who gath-

ered and served these societies—whether missionaries from the Wesleyan body in England, like Pilmoor, Rankin, and Asbury, or native American converts, like Watters, Gatch, and



DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS.

STRAWBRIDGE'S
LOG CHAPEL,
SAM'S CREEK.

Abbott—were simply lay preachers, divinely called to the work, and duly accepted and enrolled in

STONE CHAPEL, BUILT 1783, REBUILT 1800.

This building replaced the "log chapel" shown above.

the Conference by their fellows. They had received none of those rites of ordination so prized by Churchmen, and were without authority from bishop or presbyter to administer the

sacraments. Wesley, himself a regularly ordained clergyman in the Church of England, was still vigorously resisting the natural tendencies of the British Methodists to separate from the national Church. “Who leaves the Church leaves the Methodists,” he had tersely said. He demanded that chapel meetings must be so timed as not to conflict with the church services, and that the Wesleyans must partake of the Lord’s Supper and have their children baptized at the consecrated hands of the parish rector.

Ill as Wesley’s plan for keeping the Methodist body within the Church worked at home, where there was one great historic Church whose ministers were everywhere, it failed utterly in the colonies, where the Anglican rectors were, if possible, less spiritual than in England, and where the Methodist membership was recruited from Presbyterians, Friends, Lutherans, and other sects. Wesley strictly enjoined his missionaries to enforce the Wesleyan rules, and send their converts to church. But in many parishes the rector was a profligate younger son whom the Bishop of London had sent to a living in the New World to get rid of him. In other localities there were no Church ministers; and the indefatigable Methodist preachers penetrated to frontier settlements where no minister of any sect had yet appeared. To enforce the Wesleyan rule in such cases as these must be at the expense of wounded consciences or the entire neglect of the precious ordinances.

Robert Strawbridge was the first to make trouble. No Conference had sent him to America and no parchment attested his call to preach. In his backwoods home there was neither church nor minister, and, with an independence of churchly sanction which sadly shocked the formal ears to which in time it came, he cut the knot by administering bap-

tism to his converts and their children, and giving the bread and wine in the rustic societies which he had nurtured. No wonder that the severe Rankin and the strait-laced young Asbury set themselves sternly against such a breach of Wesleyan precept. At the first Conference, in 1773, the first two rules were aimed at this laxity. We may be permitted to quote them again :

1. Every preacher who acts in connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labor in America is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

2. All the people among whom we labor to be earnestly exhorted to attend the Church and receive the ordinances there ; but in a particular manner to press the people in Maryland and Virginia to the observance of this Minute.

This Conference appointed Strawbridge to the Baltimore Circuit, with the rigid Asbury as the senior preacher to keep him in order. The Journal of the latter notes that the Conference excepted Strawbridge by name from the prohibition in regard to the ordinances, though it placed him "under the particular direction of the assistant." It seems probable that he proved unruly, for he received no appointment the next year. In 1775 his name appeared on the roll for the last time, though he continued to exercise his gifts among the rural societies of his vicinity until his death, half a dozen years later. The spirit of the disciplinarian in Asbury never condoned Strawbridge's defiance of the discipline ; and when the warm-hearted Maryland pioneer who deserved a better tribute was laid in his grave all that his former associate could say was, "He is no more ; on the whole I am inclined to think that the Lord took him away in judgment, because he was in a way to do hurt to the cause."

The war brought the sacramental question to a crisis, for in Maryland and Virginia—the two colonies where the Methodists were most numerous and the Anglican Church was by

law established—most of the clergy took the Tory side and had to flee to England, abandoning their pulpits. Of the ninety-one parish clergy in Virginia in 1776 only twenty-eight were found at the end of the war, and of these only fifteen had retained their parishes.

At the Conference of 1777, the English preachers not being expected to stay the year out, an executive committee of five, three of whom were Americans—Watters, Gatch, and Ruff—was appointed to look out for the interests of the connection. Watters says that the question came up, “Whether, in our present situation of having but few ministers left in many of our parishes to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, we should administer them ourselves; for as yet we had not the ordinances among us, but were dependent on other denominations for them, some receiving them from the Presbyterians, but the greater part from the Church of England. In fact, we considered ourselves at the time as belonging to the Church of England. After much conversation on this subject it was unanimously agreed to lay it over for the determination of the next Conference.” Asbury and Shadford, with probably all the Englishmen, opposed the revolutionary innovation.

With Rankin and Shadford homeward bound, and Asbury hiding in Delaware, the preachers who met in Conference at Leesburg, Va., in 1778, felt, as Watters says, like “spiritual orphans.” To many it seemed that the time had come for them to act as ministers, but after long debate the conservatives again succeeded in postponing the important decision another twelvemonth.

The next year brought matters to a crisis. Communication and travel being interrupted by the war, the preachers could not come together in one place. For the first time the

Conference was held in two sections. The Maryland and Delaware preachers, including Watters, Garrettson, Pedicord, and Gill, assembled on April 28, 1779, at Judge White's, in Kent County, Del., where Asbury was in harbor, and those from the southern circuits met at Brockenback Chapel, Fluvanna County, Va., on May 18. The printed Minutes treat both meetings as one Conference. Of Asbury's undying opposition to the proposition which was so surely gaining ground among the preachers there was no possible doubt. The question came up in the Delaware Conference, "Shall we guard against a separation from the Church—direct or indirect?" The preachers answered, "By all means." The departure of Thomas Rankin had left the work without a head, and Asbury was now chosen "General Assistant for America"—a providential selection, in view of his long experience in the work on both continents and his ability to plan and execute.

This was, however, the act of the Northern preachers, and did not bind the whole connection. William Watters, the senior native American preacher in the work—he was still under thirty—was delegated to attend the Conference in Virginia and report the sentiments of Asbury and the Northern brethren. His mission failed to moderate the action of the Southern preachers. Deeming Wesley's authority over them terminated by the withdrawal of his missionaries, recognizing the urgent need and express desire of their people, who constituted two thirds of the connection in America, they resolved almost unanimously, "after much loving talk," to break the tie which bound them to the Church of England, and to assume, under proper restrictions and with due solemnity, the full rights and powers of Christian ministers. Four laymen of experience

as preachers—Gatch, Foster, Cole, and Ellis—were appointed and “constituted a presbytery First, to administer the ordinances themselves; second, to authorize any other preacher or preachers, approved by them, by the form of laying on of hands.”

The ministers so ordained were to give the sacraments to Methodists only They might baptize by “either sprinkling or plunging,” with a service “short and extempore, according to Matt. 28. 19, ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’” Communicants were exhorted to kneel in receiving the elements, which were administered “according to the Church order.”

Jesse Lee says that the preachers had come to the conclusion that if “God had called them to preach the Gospel, he had called them also to administer the ordinances.” The ordaining committee having done its work, the preachers went forth on their circuits as before.

Thus the beginning of 1780 found a sharp line of division running through the Methodist body in America. The majority of preachers, with the general approval, it is said, of the societies under them, had taken a step which separated them from the old Church, and in effect made them an independent Church. The minority stood firm for the old Wesleyan ways. Their numbers were few, and if a less determined fighter than Francis Asbury had been at their head, they would doubtless have acquiesced in the decision of their brethren at Fluvanna. But Asbury did not flinch. The Northern preachers met this year at Lovely Lane Chapel, in Baltimore; Asbury venturing out of Delaware to preside at their little meeting. They reaffirmed their purpose “to continue in close connection with the Church, and to press the people to a closer communion with her.” To meet the popular

demand for the sacraments they would “grant the privilege to all friendly clergy of the Church of England, at the request or desire of the people, to preach or administer the ordinances” in the Methodist chapels. The Minutes closed with a declaration of war. They recorded a unanimous disapproval of “the step our brethren have taken in Virginia,” and asserted that the offenders could not be looked upon “as Methodists in connection with Mr. Wesley and us” until they should retract and return to uniformity.

The three leading men in the Baltimore gathering—Asbury, Watters, and young Freeborn Garrettson—were selected to take an ultimatum to the Virginia preachers in Conference at Manakintown. The condition of reunion was that the Southerners must “suspend all their administrations and all meet together in Baltimore the next year.”

Two of the Southern leaders, Gatch and Ellis, had attended the Baltimore meeting in the interest of harmony, but had been cavalierly treated, as they thought, and Watters tells us that, for his part, he set out on his mission to Virginia “hoping against hope.” The three delegates were fraternally received and respectfully heard, but they found the Virginia brethren confirmed in their independent course by the manifest favor of the Lord, who had crowned their labors with success during the Conference year. Asbury and Watters presented the matter, and appealed to every consideration to bring the seceders back to the old way, but, though both parties “wept and prayed and sobbed,” neither would come to the other’s terms. The Southerners even offered to retire from the field if Asbury would take care that their work should not suffer. But he had no men with whom to supply their circuits. His proposal that they should suspend the ordinances temporarily was rejected. “They wept like children,” he says, “but

kept their opinions." To all appearances the effort for union had failed completely. The great gulf between the two parties seemed fixed. On the last night of the Conference the three retired sorrowfully to rest, having prayed as with a broken heart, but when they went next day to bid farewell forever to those whom they could no longer call brethren they found that a change had taken place. Late at night a Southern brother had providentially offered an acceptable compromise: the ordained preachers would desist from administering the ordinances for one year, until the circumstances could be presented to Wesley, and Asbury, already the chosen head of the Northern preachers, should be invited to "superintend the work at large." Next morning these pacific proposals were adopted with a shout, and the Conference broke up "with rejoicings and praises to God." Young Garrettson says, "We set our faces northward with gladness of heart, praising the Lord for his goodness."

The ordinances, thus suspended for a year, were not soon resumed. It was a great day for Methodism when the whole Conference, after two years of division, met together at Baltimore in 1781. William Watters, though so weak and ill that he could scarcely sit on his horse, made a point to be there and see the blessed sight with his own eyes, which had shed so many tears over the apparently inevitable disunion. "We rejoiced together," says he, "that the Lord had broken the snare of the devil, and our disputes were all at an end." We are told by Asbury that at this Conference "all but one agreed to return to the old plan and give up all the administrations of the ordinances. Our troubles," he adds, in an unusual spirit of hopefulness, "now seem over from that quarter."

The end, however, was not quite yet. In poor Virginia,

deserted by its parish ministers and suddenly bereft of the sacraments which the preachers had promised, the distress was great, and Asbury thought it wise at the next session (1782) to obtain the signatures of all members of Conference to a pledge "to cleave to the old plan in which we had been so greatly blessed." Only one had stood out against the final vote at Baltimore in the preceding year, and now again only one refused to sign the paper.

To his old friend George Shadford, in England, who knew his heart so well, and whose departure had been his sorest loss, Asbury wrote, after the Conference of 1783, touching the outcome of the bitter strife over this question: "You have heard of the divisions about that improper question proposed at the Deer Creek Conference (1777), 'What shall be done about the ordinances?' You know we stood foot by foot to oppose it. I cannot tell you what I suffered in this affair. However, God has brought good out of evil, and it has so cured them that I think there will never be anything formidable in that way again."

Before the end of the next year, 1784, the vexed question which had brought the societies to the verge of disruption was finally settled, to the satisfaction of preachers and people, by the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church; an independent ecclesiastical body, served by its own ordained ministers.



CHAPTER XXII

The Man at the Helm

WESLEY'S ONE-MAN THEORY.—EARLY SUPERINTENDENTS.—ASBURY CHOSEN BY THE BRETHREN.—A TOUR OF DUTY.—CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF AMERICA.

JOHAN WESLEY was no democrat. A supporter of the crown in British politics, he was himself monarch among his preachers. The Wesleyan "Conferences" were no more than the name implies. Wesley, or his appointee, was in the chair, and however freely the preachers might speak their minds in these "conversations" the final decision of all questions was reserved to him.

This personal authority Wesley strove to exert in distant America through regularly appointed deputies. As soon as the prospects of the work in the New World warranted such a step he commissioned a member of the British Conference to act as his "assistant," and committed to him the superintendence of the American societies. Richard Boardman was, it appears, the first to exercise this authority. In October, 1772, Francis Asbury received a letter from Wesley appointing him to this office, and in June of the following year he in turn was superseded by Thomas Rankin, who came clothed with special powers as general assistant. The latter says

that "Mr. Wesley had been dissatisfied with the conduct of those who superintended the rising work [in America] and determined to appoint me superintendent of the whole." As we have already noted, Rankin held the first Conference of the American preachers and applied himself vigorously to the enforcement of the Wesleyan discipline, but before his reforms were well under way the outbreak of the war impaired his efficiency and finally compelled him to return to England, together with most of his English associates.

Wesley having made no provision for a successor to Rankin, the American preachers took the matter into their own hands. Anticipating the withdrawal of their leaders, the Conference of 1777 selected a committee, composed of "five of the most judicious," to superintend the work. The Conference of 1778 was presided over by William Watters, the first American to be so honored. Asbury was at this time prudently secreted in Delaware, for political reasons, and his name does not even appear in the list of preachers printed in the Minutes for this year.

Then came the threatened division, described in the foregoing chapter. A majority of the preachers held a Conference in Virginia, while the remainder rallied around Asbury at his retreat in Delaware. The latter body not only took aggressive action touching the decision of the other preachers to administer the sacraments, but also initiated the action which eventually resulted in making Asbury a bishop. The Minutes record their declaration that "Brother Asbury ought to act as general assistant in America: first, on account of his age; second, because originally appointed by Mr. Wesley; third, being joined with Messrs. Rankin and Shadford by express order from Mr. Wesley." They went on to define the province of the general assistant: "On hearing every

preacher for and against what is in debate, the right of determination shall rest with him, according to the [English] Minutes." Thus the Northern preachers—for this action was binding only on the minority who adopted it—reaffirmed their connection with Wesley and submitted themselves to



DRAWN BY J. P. DAVIS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE HOUSE IN PETERSBURG IN WHICH ASBURY HELD HIS FIRST CONFERENCE IN VIRGINIA.

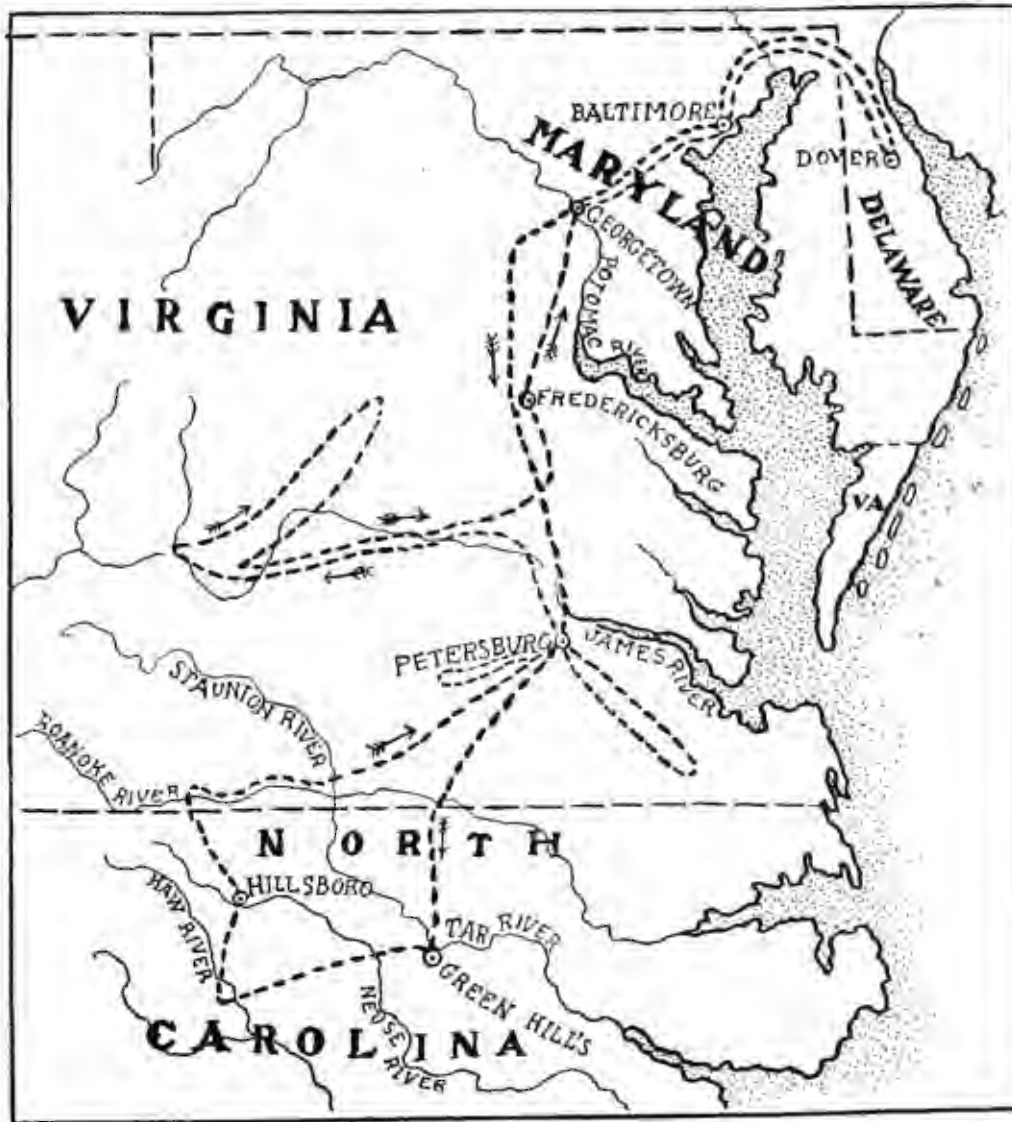
the personal government of Asbury on the Wesleyan model. The Virginia preachers pursued an independent course. They were strongly opposed to Asbury's policy in regard to baptism and Communion, and instead of accepting him for their official head they placed the superintendency in the hands of a commission of four of their own number. Of the situation in 1779 Dr. Neely says: "American Methodism was divided. The Northern section refused to administer the sacraments and was governed by Asbury, whose authority was absolute. The Southern section had the sacraments and was governed by a committee selected by the Confer-

ence. The former might have been called conservatives; the latter, radicals or progressives."

The next year, 1780, brought about a happy compromise and the Southern preachers practically accepted Mr. Asbury's authority. Thus by the election of his fellow-preachers, and not by Wesley's direct appointment, Asbury became the recognized head of the Methodist societies in America. At the same time the subsidence of the anti-Tory cry against the Methodists left him free to travel. He at once undertook a tour of inspection, visiting in the course of ten months the circuits from New Jersey to North Carolina, and even penetrating to points on the frontier which the itinerants had never reached. In this way he came into personal contact and acquaintance with the scores of young preachers who had come into the work since the beginning of the war, and he also gained a comprehensive survey of the wide field.

This first grand tour developed those qualities which distinguished Francis Asbury as the great pioneering bishop. Before his journey was half over, in October, 1780, he wrote, "I have traveled so much that it seems like confinement to rest one day; I hope I shall travel as long as I live; traveling is my health, life, and all for soul and body." No physical obstacle could turn him back. "The young man with me," he writes, "was heartless before we had traveled a mile; but when he saw how I could push it, and sometimes force my way through a thicket for there was no road, he took courage." After eight or nine hours of this sort of work they came to a settlement, "the people looking almost as wild as the deer in the woods." Here he had only time to pray and write in his Journal. This was in North Carolina, where there were few signs of life except cabins built with poles. Most of the streams they forded or swam.

Once a ferryman cursed him because his purse was empty. In southeastern Virginia he renewed his acquaintance with Rev. Devereux Jarratt, and for the first time heard the



SKETCHED BY G. WILLARD BONTE FROM ASBURY'S JOURNAL.

FRANCIS ASBURY'S SOUTHERN CIRCUIT, APRIL-NOVEMBER, 1780.

He left Dover April 24, attended Conference in Baltimore, then to Conference at Manakintown, Va., May 9, spent a month in the region of Petersburg; entered North Carolina June 16, was at Green Hills July 5; crossed Haw River July 23; at Hillsboro August 2; reentered Virginia August 12; at Petersburg September 27; Brockenback chapel, October 3; in Blue Ridge Mountains October 9-18; Fredericksburg, October 31; Baltimore, October 31; Dover, November 3.

thunders of Benjamin Abbott's exhortations and saw the smitten people "fall to the ground under it, and sink into a passive state, helpless, motionless."

A few weeks after the Conference of 1781 he was again in

the saddle in Virginia, among the foothills of the mountains, "a mountain that at this part of it is two days' journey across; thither some of our preachers are going to seek the



AFTER A DRAWING BY T. C. RUCKLE, FROM THE ORIGINAL PAINTING.

REV. FRANCIS ASBURY IN HIS FORTY-NINTH YEAR.

The so-called "lost portrait" was made for Mr. James McCannon, of Baltimore, and discovered after many years of obscurity by the Rev. Dr. George C. M. Roberts, who reproduced it in his "Centenary Pictorial Album," 1866. For its origin, see Asbury's Journal, June 18, 1794.

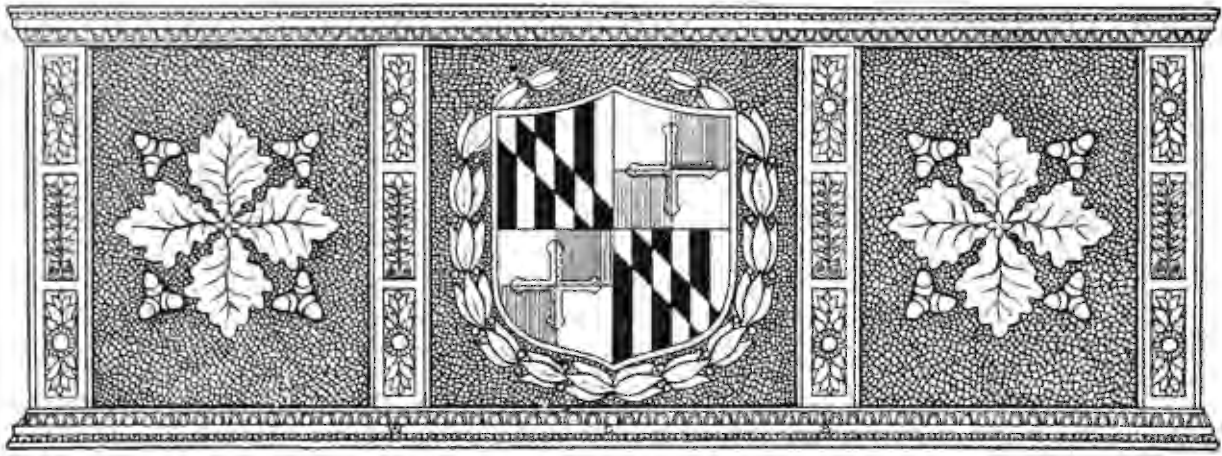
outcasts of the people." Two weeks later, after exploring one of the noble caverns of this region, he "came away filled with wonder, with humble praise, and adoration."

“I have been greatly blessed,” he wrote in his Journal, “in journeying through this mountainous district, my soul enjoying constant peace. I find a few humble, happy souls; and, although present appearances are gloomy, I have no doubt but that there will be a glorious Gospel day in this and every other part of America.” It was his serene confidence in his God and in the future of religion in America—a prospect which did not seem brilliant at this time to most observers—that supported him through the hardships of his life of poverty and unwearied toil.

Occasionally a note like the following varies the monotony of his Journal: “I have heard of a great work among the Germans toward Lancaster. Certain opposing sectarians hunt our preachers like partridges upon the mountains; they are trying to stop, but are going, I apprehend, the readiest way to establish us.”

As he came to know the quality of the young itinerants, and to take in the vastness of the territory which was the heritage of the new-born republic, his spirits rose in contemplation of the opportunity which was opening to win a nation for Christ. In the year of the peace (1783) he wrote to his dear friend Shadford, in England, praising the matchless devotion of the preachers and rhapsodizing over the prospect for religion in liberated America. He reckons himself a true American now. “I have loved, and do love her,” he said, and “your old national pride as a people has got a blow.”

Whatever golden visions might float before his eyes Asbury’s own treasure was surely not of this world. In 1784 he wrote home: “My allowance is £24 currency [about \$60], with my traveling expenses paid. I know not that I could call my one coat and waistcoat, and half a dozen shirts, two horses, and a few books my own, if my debts were paid.”



CHAPTER XXIII

Freeborn Garrettson

BIRTH AND ENVIRONMENT.—METHODIST AWAKENINGS.—“LORD, I SUBMIT.”—THE SLAVES GO FREE.—OUT WITH THE TORY.—MEMBER OF CONFERENCE.—LABORS IN THE PENINSULA.—SPECIMEN DAYS.—“OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY.”—NEW DOORS OPEN.

THE name of Freeborn Garrettson must ever hold a prominent place in any history of American Methodism. He was one of the earliest of the native youths to enlist under the Wesleyan missionaries. In the first years of his preaching service he endured unflinchingly the storm of obloquy and insult which sprang from the bitterness of political feeling. He was the chosen messenger sent in 1784 to give notice to the preachers of the coming Christmas Conference, and after the organization of the Church he was for many years one of its most sagacious and influential leaders.

The homestead of the Garrettsons—a substantial Maryland family of English origin—was pleasantly located near the head of Chesapeake Bay, and here the son Freeborn first saw the light on the 15th of August, 1752. His parents were worthy communicants of the Church of England, and his mother's deeper religious nature had been stirred by the



PAINTED BY PARADISE.

ENGRAVED BY FRY.

J. G. Hawthorn

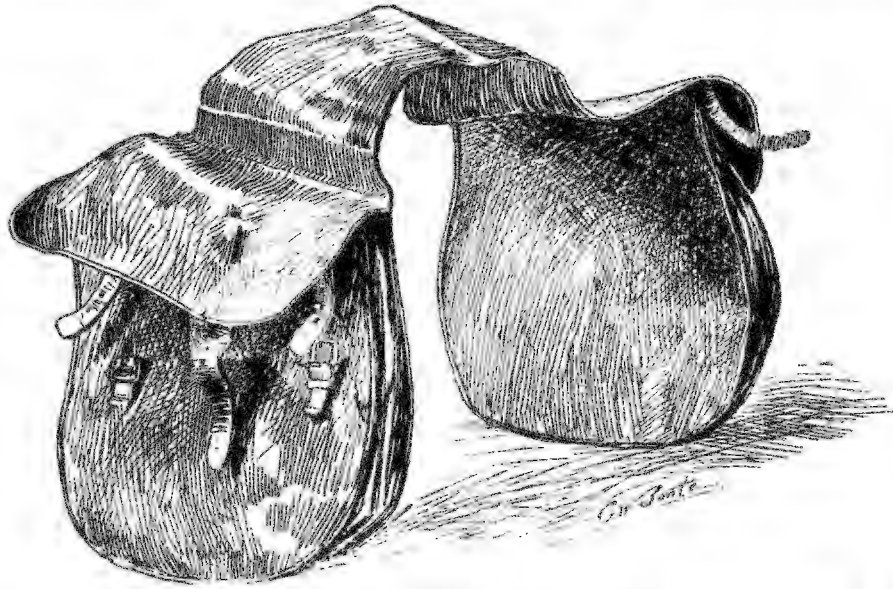
First presiding elder of the New York District.

appeals of Whitefield. But neither they nor even the rector could satisfy the boy's religious cravings. The rude preaching of Strawbridge, rough-spoken but real, which aroused the levity of his companions, made him grave.

Garrettson owed his awakening to the testimony of a fresh convert, who met him on the road and talked so sweetly of Jesus and his people that he "was deeply convinced that there was reality in that religion." The rector would have kept him away from such associations. "The Methodists," he said, "carry things too far; a man cannot know his sins are forgiven; and all we can expect in this life is a hope springing from an upright life," adding something significant about the necessity of literary qualifications for preachers of the Gospel. Yet young Garrettson felt drawn toward the Methodist meetings. He heard Asbury, and noted with surprise "that a person could go on so fluently without his sermon before him." He heard Watters, the young American whose experience was not unlike his own. Thoughts of his soul's condition came to occupy most of his time, and his father was vexed to find his son spending night after night in weeping and private prayer. The youth attempted to relieve his conscience by taking counsel of the church rector and following a life of strict morality, but this standard was far below the joyous liberty in Christ which rang out in every Methodist testimony, hymn, and exhortation.

One of Daniel Ruff's searching sermons brought matters to a crisis. Garrettson was riding home in despair when the question came to him as never before. He cried, "Lord, I submit!" and threw the reins on his horse's neck and clasped his hands. The response came quickly "I felt," says he, "that power of faith and love that I had been a stranger to. My soul was so exceeding happy that I seemed as if I wanted

to take wing and fly away to heaven." On reaching home he summoned the household and offered public prayer. A few days later he bade his slaves go free, being convinced of the iniquity of holding "our fellow-creatures" in bondage, though



DRAWN BY G. WILLARD BONTE.

FROM THE ORIGINAL IN THE METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY, N. Y.

THE SADDLEBAGS OF THE REV. FREEBORN GARRETTSON.

A good example of this indispensable feature of the equipment of the circuit rider of the heroic days.

he says he "had never read a book on the subject, nor been told so by anyone. It was God that taught me the impropriety of holding slaves, and I shall never be able to praise him enough for it."

In those days, when, as Watters tells us, every convert was a prophet, young Garrettson, mindful of the impression which he had received from the nameless brother, was soon telling his experience to all who would listen. With fellow-travelers on the highway and by the firesides of the neighboring planters, he told with ardor of his escape from the bondage of sin. The work was starving for lack of helpers, and the keen-eyed itinerants were quick to press such a zealous convert into service. In 1775 Martin Rodda took him around his circuit. Partisan feeling was intense at the time,

and just then for a preacher to be found in Rodda's company was a poor recommendation to an American congregation. Garrettson was hooted, struck in the face, drafted for service in the army, and fined. None of these things moved him. In a vision of deep sleep he saw the devil himself lay hold upon him, to drag him away from the angel of light who was calling him to preach, but he cried out in his dream, "Lord, send by whom thou wilt; I am willing to go and preach thy Gospel;" whereupon the foul fiend incontinently vanished. Garrettson now gave himself wholly to the itinerant work, and opened a circuit of his own. It was at this time that his words made a deep impression upon Ezekiel Cooper; then a lad of thirteen, but destined to become one of the most useful Methodists of his generation.

In 1776 the name of Freeborn Garrettson appeared for the first time in the list of Conference appointments. Frederick was his first circuit, and he traveled it in spite of obstacles which would have defeated a less determined man. The latter half of the year he traveled Fairfax Circuit, following the Virginia bank of the Potomac to new settlements in the mountains where no preacher had hitherto been heard. The people hung around him, he says, so that he could scarcely get free, begging him with tears not to leave them. In 1777 he was sent to Brunswick, in southern Virginia, with Watters, where the great revival was already on foot. He could now rejoice in the numbers and pentecostal fervor of the great outdoor meetings in that region, and rejoiced in his own progress toward "that perfect love that casts out fear."

Garrettson had need of all his heroism when, in 1778, his appointment across the Chesapeake took him upon the peninsula of Maryland, a region where his former associate, Rodda, had brought Methodism into ill repute by his pernicious

Royalist activity. Joseph Hartley, his colleague, was clapped into jail, though the authorities soon concluded to release him, for by preaching through his barred window he attracted larger congregations than when left to himself. Garrettson, undismayed by Hartley's experience, passed up and down through the peninsula counties of Maryland and into Delaware, offering salvation to souls perishing in sin and as far as possible avoiding political questions. His prudence did not serve him. In Queen Anne County he was brutally knocked from his horse and nearly killed by an ex-magistrate. But his appointment to preach had to be kept, and that same evening from his bed he spoke his burning message to a few friends gathered in a private house. The text bespoke the hero's character: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The next day he was out again and preached twice, his bandaged wounds being not less eloquent than his tongue concerning the peace that passeth understanding. Such devotion was irresistible. Such a man, they said, could be no Tory spy. From this time he had the people on his side.

The fruits of Garrettson's labors in the upper part of the peninsula were abundant and lasting. New societies were gathered, new chapels erected, and scores of converts added to those who rejoiced in the witness of sins forgiven. Men and women who had not heard a real sermon since Whitefield's campaign, and who "had only a little spark left," recognized on Garrettson's lips a coal from the same high altar, and opened their hearts and houses to his preaching. His success aroused the representatives of rival sects, but his tact and earnestness were as successful against them as his indomitable spirit had been against political opponents.

The Journal which Garrettson kept in those days, and

which was one of the earliest and most interesting publications of the Methodist press, shows the desperate spiritual dearth of the people to whom the Methodists preached. Some portions of the peninsula were quite destitute of religion. Meeting a man in the road, Garrettson asked him his customary question, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" "Sir," replied the rustic, "I know not where the gentleman lives." The answer so amazed the preacher that he repeated his question more clearly, supposing that he had been misunderstood, but he could get nothing out of the fellow except, "I know not the man."

In one place the minister joined the outcry against the Methodist, and maintained that he "held out nineteen errors." Lewd fellows of the baser sort, with others who would have considered themselves of "the quality," endeavored to confuse the young preacher. But trials of smoke, bell ringing, and drums were but a light affliction. The more the minister preached and spoke against him, he says, "the more earnestly did the people search their Bibles to know whether these things were so." His own verdict upon his work is, "The Lord enlarged my heart, and gave me many precious souls."

After a brief term of labor in New Jersey, in 1780, Garrettson returned to the peninsula to encounter the last and bitterest wave of persecution in Dorchester County. He was seized while preaching and thrown into the wretched jail at Cambridge. His imprisonment was long but far from tedious, for he assures us that his soul was so exceedingly happy that he scarcely knew how the days and nights passed. In fifteen months of service on the peninsula, in 1778-9, Garrettson preached in over one hundred places that had never heard the Methodist message of free and full salvation.

After preaching it was his custom, by no means singular among the early preachers, to explain the nature and design of the Methodist societies, and to “desire the weeping flock that wished to join to draw nigh and open their minds.” Then he would examine them one by one, and admit those who seemed to be in earnest.

A few specimen Sabbaths drawn from Garrettson’s invaluable Journal will serve to display the activity of a successful preacher in those days, though it should be remembered that the week was filled with labors scarcely less severe.

On June 21, 1779, Garrettson had intended meeting the society for personal examination at 8 A.M., but so many strangers were present that he could not miss the opportunity to preach. “At twelve about fifteen hundred gathered, and the Lord made bare his arm under the spreading trees.” After a brief intermission he preached again, whereupon “weeping was on every side,” and it seemed as if the whole country would turn to the Lord. Throughout the week Garrettson remained in that locality, visiting the distressed and conversing on personal religion and preaching several times a day.

Another Sabbath—Dover, Del., July 5, 1779. Preached at Dover a little after sunrise; then rode four miles and preached with great effect to a throng at Brother B——’s at 9 A. M. At 1 P. M. preached again under the trees at Mother Kill, six miles farther on. Again five miles, and then the fourth and best discourse of the day at sunset. A Quaker who heard his sermon at sunset declared “he spake by the Spirit, if any man did,” but when he learned how many times Garrettson had already spoken that day he altered his mind. That day was exceptional even for Garrettson, but the preacher asserts that he “scarcely felt the fatigues of the

day" after fifteen miles in the saddle and six hours in the pulpit on a diet of milk and water.

Garrettson was sometimes called an enthusiast—an epithet which a Methodist rarely escaped in those days. The fact that he allowed himself to be controlled by dreams and visions perhaps gave some force to the charge, though his dominant good sense saved him from any extravagances. "I did by no means intend to gratify the curiosity or tickle the ears of those who live in pleasure," he wrote after he had been sixteen years in the ministry; his aim was "to be instrumental in bringing precious souls to the Lord Jesus Christ." At one place, the stock complaint had been raised against the Methodists "that they had hollowing meetings;" which led Garrettson to say that, for himself, he is "never distressed in hearing convinced sinners crying for mercy, though they were to cry so loud as to be heard a mile."

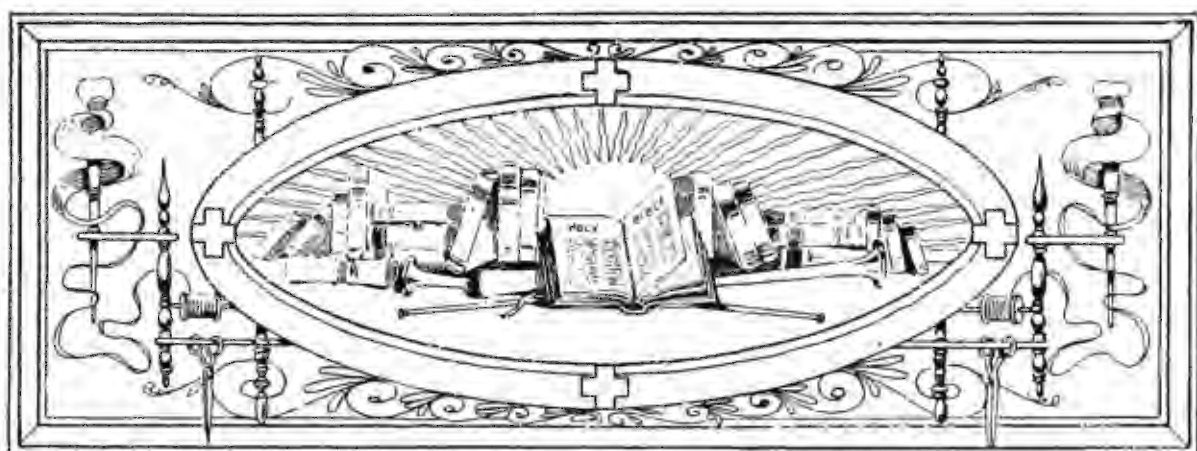
Garrettson's success on the peninsula gave him prominence among the preachers, in whose ranks the war had played such havoc, and in the following years he was appointed to stations of importance in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina. On his brief tour of the Little York region, in Pennsylvania, in 1781, he preached in the German churches and in the barns of the farmers, with general approval. "This is the right religion," said these honest people. It was on one of these occasions that a simple-minded couple were so stirred by one of his appeals that they went home, washed, and dressed themselves in clean linen, taking thus literally the "washing of regeneration" of which the preacher had spoken. "Old things have passed away," said they, and began throwing their old clothes and bedding and even Continental currency into the fire. The horrified neighbors ran in and put a stop to this waste, clapped a

mustard plaster on the man, and, following the advice of a wise Quaker woman, sent posthaste after the preacher to return and make good the mischief he had wrought. Garrettson came back as fast as his horse could carry him, stripped off the plaster, and in a few earnest words showed the good people the true meaning of the doctrine which they had so strangely misunderstood.

While on the Sussex Circuit, in 1781, Garrettson was seriously embarrassed by the war, Cornwallis on one side and Lafayette on the other being then campaigning in Virginia. Here again his popularity suffered from his plain speaking on the wrong of slaveholding and the right of an American to be a man of peace in time of war—this within earshot of the guns at Yorktown.

Asbury's keen eye for ability early singled out this energetic son of Maryland for especial responsibilities—the only honors in his gift. A man who could travel five thousand miles and preach five hundred sermons in a twelvemonth, as Garrettson did in 1781, was a workman after the general assistant's own model.

In 1784 he was appointed to proceed to Charleston, to reestablish upon a sound basis the work in South Carolina. Before his departure, however, the event occurred which was to transform American Methodism and open new fields to his activity. Dr. Coke's arrival from England, with plans for a Church organization, made it advisable to summon all the preachers to a special Conference or convention in Baltimore, and Garrettson was selected for the onerous duty of summoning the laborers from their scattered circuits. He was now in his thirty-third year, energetic, hopeful, courageous, the embodiment of manly vigor, and already gave fair promise of his subsequent career of usefulness.



CHAPTER XXIV

The Sisters

METHODISM AND WOMAN.—REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH WOMEN.—BARBARA HECK.—MARY THORN.—THE PROPHET'S CHAMBER.—MARY WHITE.—ANN BASSETT.—PRUDENCE GOUGH.—A LOOK AHEAD.

THE son of Susanna Wesley was not the person to underrate the advantage of enlisting the gentleness and tact of women in Christian work. It is one of the chief glories of the religious movement to which John Wesley gave impulse and direction that it threw open to consecrated womanhood a field of almost unlimited usefulness. Methodism came preaching a free salvation and a real experience. The saying that the early converts were all prophets applies to both sexes. Men and women alike were urged to bear testimony to what the Lord had done for them. Abundant and unprecedented opportunity for religious conversation and exhortation was afforded by the prayer meetings, band meetings, and class meetings which formed distinctive features of the Methodist plan. Thus the convert not only had something to say, but a place to say it in and an interested audience. Those who excelled in these gatherings were certain to come to the attention of the circuit preacher and to be appointed to the leadership of classes, an office to which women and men were alike eligible.

Nor was religious activity limited to those who had the gift of exhortation or leadership. Salvation by faith might be the basis of Wesleyan theology, but its itinerants insisted so strongly upon a life of holiness that they were freely accused of "preaching up good works." In the roll of those who distinguished themselves in works of mercy and help are the names of honorable women not a few. In England Mary Bosanquet had turned her house into an orphanage; Sarah Ryan had left a life of gayety that she might mother the lads in Kingswood School. "Show me the woman," said Wesley, "in England, Wales, or Ireland, who has done so much good as Grace Murray." The Countess of Huntingdon was but one of the ladies of rank who made costly sacrifices for the extension of the cause; still others, like Hester Ann Rogers and Dinah Evans, were evangelists of uncommon gifts and grace.

A woman's name must be written in the opening chapter of American Methodism, whatever the writer's theory of the place of its origin. Whether the one-eyed officer, the carpenter schoolmaster, or the Irish farmer be reckoned its hero, its heroine was Barbara Heck. The story of the righteous German woman who scattered the card-players and recalled Philip Embury to his duty will be told as long as Methodist children listen at their mother's knee to the wonderful story of their Church. It is safe to say that the project of building the first chapel in New York would have failed had it not been for this woman's faith and determination. The names of more than thirty women appear among the subscribers to the building fund. The largest contribution from a woman was Mrs. Anderson's £3 4s., and from other entries in the account books of the society it seems probable that she was a poor widow who earned her living by working by the day.

Barbara Heck and the Card Players.

Drawn by Jno. Cassel.



The wife of the Maryland pioneer deserves a place in this company, for it is said that John Evans, the first member of Strawbridge's first society, owed his conversion to an earnest appeal on the subject of experimental religion made to him by Mrs. Strawbridge.

When the time came to open a house for the preacher in New York—the first American Methodist parsonage—the women were almost the only contributors; from Mrs. Taylor, who loaned “4 chairs, 1 night-chair, 5 pictures, 3 tables, pr. And Irons, Chaving dish, Tongs and shovel, and two Iron pots,” to Mrs. Jarvis's and Mrs. Bininger's “one green window curtain” each.

Outside of New York city the women had as yet no parsonages to furnish, but they did not lack opportunities to show their zeal for the cause and render aid and comfort to the homeless preachers. The reader of the Journals of Asbury, Garrettson, or other early Methodist diarists is struck by the frequency with which, in the absence of chapels, a woman's house is the preaching place. Even in times of the anti-Tory outcry, when well-disposed men shrank from harboring the noncombatant preachers, good women dared receive them into their houses and bind up their wounds. It was the pride of many a housekeeper that the preachers had learned to regard her guest room as a prophet's chamber. In 1772, when Asbury fell sick in Philadelphia, he acknowledged the tender care of “dear sister Wilmer.” This was Mrs. Mary Barker Wilmer, the second woman to lead a Methodist class in the Quaker city. She made her dwelling a home of rest for the preachers.

When Pilmoor was laboring in Philadelphia, in 1770, a Baptist widow, named Mary Thorn, recently arrived from the South, seeking a house for worship, was providentially

led into a Methodist meeting. In the face of protests from her family and expulsion from her Communion she became an ardent Methodist and a leader of band and class. Her autobiography shows the perils she thus incurred from riotous mobs: "In meeting I was struck down nearly lifeless. At the hazard of my life I was pitched through a glass door, and when a leader of three classes I was reproached with the name of Mother Confessor, was pelted through the streets, and stoned in effigy. One, armed, stood behind the class door to kill me, till the Lord smote him with a better weapon." Her mother cried out, "These birds of passage have bereaved me of my children; they will all be in Bedlam." Her parents finally gave her the choice of leaving the Methodists or being disinherited and deserted. "A day of wormwood and gall," says Mary Thorn, "when my mind was in agony, and that word of our Lord thundered in my soul, 'He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me.' I cried out, 'It is enough, Lord, here I am, do with me as seemeth good in thy sight, only save my soul.' Thus I gave my final answer to my dear mother, and never saw them more. This I suffered only for Methodism, their only cause of offense."

Next the Baptist elders and deacons reasoned with Mrs. Thorn to renounce the Methodists. Finally she and others of her sect who were under the same accusation were summoned before the association. After trial she writes, "We were placed before the Communion table, where the ministers, elders, and deacons sat, and ten of us standing firm, the books were opened, and with awful denunciations our names before the whole congregation were erased." It was a bitter experience, but Mrs. Thorn exclaimed in that solemn meeting, "Blessed be God, ye cannot erase my name

out of the Lamb's book of life; we know whom we worship!" Atkinson thinks that Mrs. Thorn, who was a woman of marked intelligence, supported herself by teaching school. With her bread to earn and her classes and bands to meet and instruct, this remarkable woman had time for other work. In the midst of the war, when the city was vexed by plague and famine, she went to the hospitals day and night to serve the sick and wounded, when not a friend would brave the infection. "Thus," she says, "by attending them in their extremity, I sometimes had the consolation of seeing them die happy." When the redcoats took St. George's for a drill hall her dwelling became a Methodist sanctuary.

In 1778 Mrs. Thorn married an English sea captain named Parker, and removed to England, where her career of usefulness was long continued. Many other names are preserved of women in Philadelphia and Baltimore who assisted the early preachers by opening their homes and by obtaining a hearing for them. Some of them even accompanied the preachers, and illustrated the sermon with their testimony. Most of these women, whose names are now only a fragrant memory, were of humble station, as this world reckons rank, and beyond the bare name or initial, preserved in a musty journal, no mention of them is made in earthly records; but certain ladies of gentlest birth, representing the best families of the colonial aristocracy of Delaware and Maryland, have left more lasting impression upon Methodist history.

Of all the saintly women of this period no names are more familiar to the Methodist student than those of Mary White, Ann Bassett, and Prudence Gough. Mrs. White was the wife of that Judge Thomas White of Kent County, Del., whose fine colonial hip-roofed mansion often sheltered the wayworn itinerant. She and her husband were faithful

and conscientious members of the Church of England before the Methodist preachers came pointing them to a more satisfactory experience. Both gladly entered upon the new way, and gave themselves unreservedly to the cause. The lady was as courageous as she was talented, and throughout the dark days when the Delaware Methodists were unjustly persecuted as Tories she was a mainstay of their defense. When her husband was seized by the authorities for harboring Asbury she flung herself between him and his captors, passionately asserting his patriotism. It was her persistency that effected his ultimate release. No preacher passed her way without making her house his home. Her dwelling was open to the preaching, and at the time of the quarterly meeting she lodged all the itinerants that her roof-tree could cover. She took part in public services of the society, met the class, and it is said that she would have preached had not Asbury frowned on such an innovation. Once, it is related, she went out from her house door and knelt among a company of homesick conscripts, weeping with them and commending their souls to the care of the heavenly Father.

It was at her house that her husband's friend, Lawyer Richard Bassett, one of the first citizens of the State—afterward signer of the United States Constitution, and judge and United States senator—first made the acquaintance of Asbury, taking his hostess's word for it that her sober guests were "some of the best men in the world." So pleased was he with the interview that he invited them to visit him at his home in Dover, though the prospect of their coming worried his wife. But Asbury soon charmed away her fears, and Mrs. Ann Ennalls Bassett became one of the staunchest friends of the Methodists in Delaware. This wealthy family possessed a landed estate in Cecil County, Md., Bohemia Manor,

and their mansion became a veritable asylum for the preachers. A chapel was erected, a society formed, and the manor became famous for the pentecostal outpourings on the occasion of quarterly meetings. Two of Mrs. Bassett's kinswomen, the Misses Ennalls, who probably received their impulse from her, have the credit of introducing Methodism into Dorchester County, Md., the scene of Freeborn Garrettson's bitterest persecution and most complete victory.

What White's mansion and Bohemia Manor were in the peninsula Perry Hall was to the Methodists of the Western Shore. Its mistress, Prudence Ridgely Gough, was the sister of Charles Ridgely, afterward governor, and the wife of one of the wealthiest gentlemen in that aristocratic province. In the midst of the reckless gayety and worldly distractions which characterized the social circle in which she moved Prudence Gough found a calm repose in "the Methodists' God." Her husband, whose associations conspired to assail his religious character, declared, after his reclamation, "O, if my wife had ever given way to the world, I should have been lost!" Mrs. Gough herself did not shrink from leading the daily religious services in the household chapel, at which all persons on the estate, field hands and guests alike, were expected to be present. She made her country seat—then one of the most elegant in America—the abode of simplicity and piety as well as of whole-hearted hospitality. The preachers were the most welcome sojourners there, and in its apartments Coke and Asbury completed their preparations for the historic Christmas Conference of 1784.

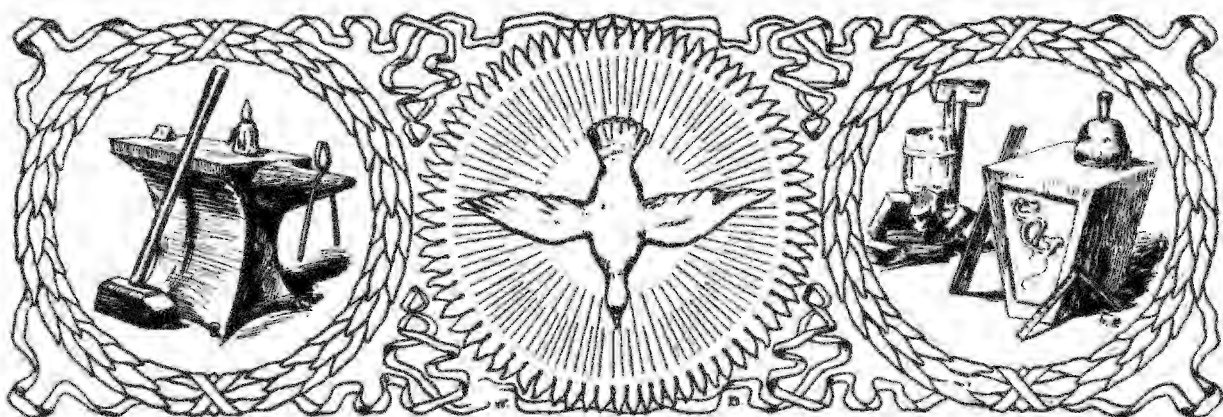
The conspicuous social position of the Whites, the Bassetts, and the Goughs has given them a large place in the eye of historians, but the family traditions of those times preserve

the names of numberless women not a whit below them in devotion to the principles of the struggling sect which was everywhere spoken against. Gossipy Lednum tells of a vestryman's daughter who was conscience-stricken by hearing a preacher declare that dancing was a sin. She gave in her name to the Methodist society, and her tattling brother told his father that Rhoda had disgraced the family by "joining the new preacher." But the worldly-wise old gentleman took the news calmly. "If the Methodists disown their people for dancing," said he, "they will soon be clear of Rhoda. She will dance." Garrettson made her see that she needed not so much to do or do without certain things as to have the sense of pardon through Christ. This she received with great joy. Her father remonstrated with her for her altered habits; but she replied, "I want to go to heaven, and I cannot go in my sins." Ultimately her prayers and winning example brought the entire family into the Methodist fold.

The same chronicler affirms that when Miss Ennalls, of Dorchester County, Md., was converted, her family, who had never seen a Methodist, thought her demented. Yet it was through her influence that the county was first opened to Methodist preaching. Tradition says that Mrs. Rogers, a blind woman, introduced Methodism into the county of Queen Anne, in the same State.

This record of personal devotion might be greatly enlarged if space permitted the mention of the Methodist women of this first period who testified by every means at their command their hearty allegiance to the cause of spiritual religion. In this righteous service daughters braved the anger of parents, women of fashion put on the plain garb of the Methodists and set their hands to works of mercy and help; overworked housewives gave themselves to hospitality for the

wifeless and homeless itinerants; delicate women rescued them from violent men; and timid sisters lifted their voices in prayer and praise and in effective testimony to the God of all grace. The grand development of woman's work not only in the Methodist Church, but throughout the Protestant churches of América, is in large measure the outgrowth of the Methodist system, which opened to the Christian women such fields of usefulness as they had never before entered.



CHAPTER XXV

The Brethren

FILLING UP THE RANKS.—THE SPIRIT OF THE PREACHERS.—ACCESSIONS, 1773-1784.—NOTABLE ACCESSIONS.—SKETCHES AND PERSONAL INCIDENTS.

THE outbreak of the Revolution not only caused the withdrawal of the English preachers, but prevented other trained Wesleyan evangelists from coming to these shores. Yet even in war times there was a growing demand for men to supply the circuits, ever extending and subdividing as the work spread into new localities. It was vain to expect aid from the colonial clergy of the Church of England, though, had all its ministers shared the liberal spirit of Jarratt, McRoberts, and McGaw, this channel might have brought relief. The people were turning eagerly from the dry husks of formal services and asking for the bread of life and a religion which they could enjoy. There was pressing need for evangelists, and scanty time to educate and train them. The Conference must let the whitening fields go ungarnered, or take such men as came to its hand, press the reaping-hook into their grasp, and thrust them out to labor in God's name. Scores of raw youths were thus commissioned. They stepped out of every walk in life; there were rough hands from the plow and the soft-handed sons of

gentlemen; a few—and none surpassed these in moving sinners—were vicious men whom the winged word of some earnest preacher had stopped in a career of sin and turned to the service of their fellow-men.

Dozens of names on the rolls of these early Conferences appear once, twice, thrice, then disappear without a word of explanation. Those who married must needs locate, for the feeble societies could not support a preacher's family. Asbury, celibate himself, bitterly bemoaned the havoc that matrimony played among his best preachers. The meager records tell of some who fell victims to the hardships of travel and exposure—the lot of the men who lived in the saddle. Preaching the Gospel was not a profession or a means of livelihood to the early itinerants, and many who flit through the Minutes merely came into the work temporarily, to meet some urgent need; and in this roll of emergency there are names that shine among the brightest in the Methodist galaxy, preachers who gave long lives of strenuous endeavor to the cause which kindled their youthful ardor.

“I have never, since I knew the Lord, seen anything in this world worth living for an hour but to prepare and to assist others to prepare for that glorious kingdom which shall be revealed at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” The words are of William Watters, but the same sentiment is written largely in the lives of many of his self-denying fellow-preachers. Even when circumstances forced them to desist from traveling they usually employed their gifts by preaching every Sunday, and often on week days. Thus Watters and Gatch as Virginia planters were scarcely less useful than they had been when in the active work.

In the long roll of the preachers whose names figure in the Minutes of these years, 1773–1784, are many who are men-

tioned but once and then slip out of sight. There are other famous names, like John Dickins and the great elders, James O'Kelly, Jesse Lee, Freeborn Garrettson, Francis Poythress, Philip Bruce, Reuben Ellis, Nelson Reed, and Thomas Ware, for whom these years served as a training school for future responsibilities. A few, like Caleb Pedicord, lived out their lives in these wilderness years and died with scarcely a Pisgah-sight of the promised land in which American Methodism should be a great and conquering Church. Six preachers were admitted in 1775: William Duke, "a friend of Captain Webb;" John Wade, Daniel Ruff, Isaac Rollins, Samuel Spragg, and Edward Drumgole. Drumgole was a converted Romanist, one of the first of those silvery Celtic orators who have been so popular among us. He labored until 1786 on the wide circuits of Virginia and North Carolina, and some years after his marriage located in the latter State, though he never lost his power as a revivalist. He died in 1836, leaving a family distinguished in Southern public affairs. Two years later, 1777, the Conference received Nicholas Watters, William's earnest brother; John Sigman, Joseph Hartley, who preached through the gratings of his jail; James Foster, William Wren, Thomas McClure, Freeborn Garrettson, and Isham Tatum. Garrettson's career as the marshal of Methodism along the Hudson falls in a later period, but Tatum's activity lasted but a few years. He was a North Carolinian, and an orator of unusual brilliancy. He served in his native State and in Virginia, where, after marrying, he located in 1781. At the time of his death, about 1836, he was one of the oldest Methodist preachers in the world. Francis Poythress, who was admitted on trial in 1776, was to become a pillar in the early Church in the wilderness beyond the mountains.

The reinforcements for 1778 include Joseph Cromwell, William Gill, of Delaware—the intellectual tailor, of whom Dr. Benjamin Rush said, “He is the greatest divine I ever heard;” his friend, John Tunnell, who was to pour out his life for the Tennessee mountaineers; John Littlejohn, Samuel Strong, Thomas Chew, Carter Cole, and John Dickins—sage in counsel, the organizer of the publishing interests of American Methodism. Among those received on trial in this year were Henry Willis, Asbury’s saintly friend; James O’Kelly, the pugnacious rebel against his episcopal authority; and the brave and beloved Richard Ivy.

As the levies become more numerous rare names only can be noted: Leroy Cole, who started out on a half century of service; Reuben Ellis, one of the pioneer elders of North Carolina; diminutive Philip Cox, who carried all his effects in a linen wallet and went afoot for want of a horse; John Haggerty, a trophy of John King’s zeal; and stout Nelson Reed, renowned for his assertive Americanism and for purveying such plain spiritual victual that he was termed “the bacon and cabbage preacher.”

Two members of the class of 1781 were Joseph Everett, who had been reclaimed from a reckless life, and who, under Pedicord’s persuasive influence, became a mighty evangelist; and Jeremiah Lambert, whom the Christmas Conference was to send out as a foreign missionary four years later.

In the three years before the Christmas Conference of 1784 some of the most distinguished men of the infant Church entered the itinerant service: Peter Moriarty, a converted Roman Catholic; Beverly Allen, who, having preached Christ to thousands in the South, should himself become a castaway; James Haw, first captain of the Methodist vanguard in Kentucky; Philip Bruce, of North Carolina, a fiery preacher and

wise administrator; John Easter, "the Benjamin Abbott of the South," and the spiritual father of William McKendree and Enoch George; Woolman Hickson, the founder of Brooklyn Methodism; Jesse Lee, the apostle of New England; Isaac Smith, a hero of South Carolina; Caleb Boyer, of Delaware, "the Paul of the old itinerancy;" William



FROM THE DRAWING IN WARREN'S "HISTORY OF OLD SANDS STREET CHURCH"

REV. WOOLMAN HICKSON'S FIRST SERMON IN BROOKLYN.

While stationed in New York Mr. Hickson came to Brooklyn and preached from a table in New Street (afterward Sands Street), near the site of the later Sands Street Methodist Episcopal Church.

Phœbus, preacher, physician, and editor; Ignatius Pigman, whose oratorial successes diverted him to the law; Ira Ellis, in whose uncultivated mind Asbury discerned the talents of a Jefferson; and Thomas Ware, Pedicord's most distinguished convert—pastor, presiding elder, and agent of the Book Concern.

While some of these names will reappear in connection with the history of the events of which they were a part, the

most of them must be dismissed with bare mention or a brief note of some incident expressive of their character and work.

Caleb Pedicord was, for the times, a singularly refined and gentle soul, a sweet singer, and an exponent of that love he preached. He was a young Marylander, whose heart Strawberry had touched and whose lips had felt the coal from the altar. When urged to become an itinerant he shrank back. "What! my son," urged Asbury, "have you no conviction that you should follow the direction of Him who commissioned you to preach! Has the charge given to the disciples been revoked? Is the world evangelized?" Accepting his duty in 1777, Pedicord preached out his short life span in Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, and Virginia, and the ruffianly assaults which he suffered in time of war could not divert or stop him. Joseph Everett and Thomas Ware came into the ministry through his exertions. It was to the latter that he wrote in his last days the beautiful letter in which occurs his remarkable forecast of Methodism: "It has lived through the war, and will live through all future time. Christendom will become more enlightened, will feel a divine impulse, and a way will be cast on which itinerants may swiftly move, and in sufficient numbers proclaim the commands of God." The obituary notice of this saintly man is the first ever printed in the Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It is in 1785, and three lines amply suffice for his scant eulogy: "Caleb Pedicord, a man of sorrows, and, like his Master, acquainted with grief; but a man dead to the world and much devoted to God."

John Haggerty had been rigidly moral, and observed the form of godliness before John King opened his heart to vital religion. He traveled and preached, chiefly in his native Maryland, until 1792, when he began a second course

of usefulness as a local preacher, active in every Christian service, and dying in 1823, ripe in years and rich in grace.

Another Marylander, Nelson Reed, survived all who were members of Conference. He joined in 1779, and was reputed the dean of the connection when he died, in 1840. He was short, strong, and as "compact as a round shot, and nearly as irresistible when his aim was taken." The floor of the Conference suited him better than his pulpit, and his name is connected with some of the most notable legislation of the early days. His tilts with Bishop Coke display his sturdy independence. Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia were the scene of his labors, where he excelled as a presiding elder.

Joseph Everett, on the other hand, was great as a preacher, exhibiting a degree of that sublime power which marked the eloquence of Whitefield, who first reclaimed him from a profligate life. He was forty-eight years old when he began to preach, and when failing strength forced him out of the ranks, in 1804, his bold invectives against sin and sinners and his glowing pictures of the joys of salvation were well known through the middle Atlantic districts. He was one of the most blunt and rough preachers of his time, but his success was undoubted. He died at Cambridge, in his native State, Maryland, in 1809.

Philip Bruce, or deBruise—for he was one of the Carolina Huguenots—was born near King's Mountain, was with the patriot army in the battle fought there, and became a Methodist preacher in 1781. He is described as a tall man, with a stern and dignified countenance which masked a kindly heart. His fine judgment, strong sense of justice, and force of character fitted him admirably for his long service as presiding elder in Virginia and the Carolinas. In 1817 he be-

came superannuated, and removed from Virginia to Tennessee, where he died in 1826.

William Phœbus, whose ministerial labors lay chiefly in New York and on Long Island, had some qualities not common to his brethren.

He was a practicing physician in New York city, and a man whose studies took him outside the indispensable works on Wesleyan theology. His own style in preaching was too learned for great popularity, and he reserved his choicest scorn for pulpit theatricals.

"Pugh!" he exclaimed to one who marveled at the vogue of such sensational sermons, "If I were to pull off my old boot and

throw it into the air and cry, Hurrah! hurrah! I should soon have the crowd around me." His reverential manner was most impressive, and he would not speak the name of his Redeemer without recognizing its sanctity by inclining his head or uncovering.



A handwritten signature of William Phœbus in cursive script, featuring a large, ornate initial 'W' and a long, flowing underline.

The year in which Coke came over, with Wesley's commission for the organization of the Methodist societies into a Church, brought in a group of noble men. Wilson Lee, of Delaware, was one. He offered himself in 1784, and, though of slender physical resources, took work for nine years in the roughest frontier circuits of Pennsylvania, western Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, hazarding his life in the Indian country in order to carry the Gospel to the settlements on Western waters. In 1793 he was relieved of this exhausting duty, but his health was shattered forever. He lived to do faithful service on the seaboard, and his last appointment, as presiding elder on Baltimore District, was marked by a great revival. The Conference obituary of 1805 speaks of his neatness of dress, affability of manner, fervent spirit, and consuming zeal.

When Isaac Smith came up to the Virginia Conference, in 1784, for admission, he was opposed on the ground that he lacked "gifts." But Asbury befriended the young Virginian, whose forehead was scarred by a British bullet. He was taken on trial and sent to North Carolina. He was a fine figure, his features combining gentleness and dignity, and his robust physique calculated to meet the strain of the missionary work in the Carolinas, where he was very effective. His preaching was plain and practical. "He had many texts," says one who knew him, "but only one subject, and that was love!" His marriage forced him to leave the traveling ministry in 1796. He settled in Camden, S. C., where he lived twenty-four years of abundant usefulness and universal respect. In 1820 he returned to the itinerancy and spent five years on a mission to the Creek Indians, where he was greatly beloved. He died on a Sabbath morning in July, 1834.



CHAPTER XXVI

A Handful of Corn

A CORNCRIB PROPHECY.—1775 AND 1784.—CONFERENCE LEGISLATION 1775-1784.—ITINERANCY, SALARIES, SLAVEHOLDING, DRAM DRINKING, EARLY RISING.—CHANGES IN PERSONNEL.—THE WAR AS A DISSEMINATOR OF METHODISM.—BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS.

WHEN Barratt's Chapel, in Delaware, was built, in 1780—a triumph of faith in the midst of discouragements—it was “the grandest country chapel in America.” Its dimensions were forty-two by forty-eight feet, and it is reported that one who stood by wagged his head, saying “’twas no use to put up so large a building for the Methodists; for after the war a corncrib would hold ’em all.” Never was false prophet so confounded by events; never did a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains yield more bountiful harvest.

According to the Minutes of the Conference held at Philadelphia, 1775, twenty preachers—one half of them missionaries from the British Wesleyan body—were appointed to ten circuits, New York, Philadelphia, Trenton, Greenwich, Chester, Kent, Baltimore, Frederick, Norfolk, and Brunswick, scattered along the seaboard from the Hudson to Cape

Hatteras. The total number of persons "in society" was 3,148, one half of whom were in Maryland and Virginia. This was the status of American Methodism in the year in which the war broke out.

Contrast with these meager statistics the figures reported



DRAWN BY J. P. DAVIS.

FROM A WOODCUT.

BARRATT'S CHAPEL.

"The grandest country chapel in America." Where Coke and Asbury met. One mile from Frederica, eleven miles southeast of Dover, Del.

in the Conference Minutes of 1784, the first Conference after the war.

The Minutes of 1775 hardly fill two pages in the printed volume of the "Old Minutes." The Minutes for 1784 require four times that space. Although but six of the ten early circuits are recognized by name, the whole number of circuits arose to forty-six, traveled by eighty-three preachers,

mostly American born. The numbers in membership lacked but twelve of the round 15,000; the State of Maryland alone, where the opposition had been most determined, returning more Methodists than were in the whole western world nine years before. Many of the new circuits were subdivisions and extensions of the old; but such names as Juniata, Holstein, Yadkin, Tar River, Camden, Redstone, Wilmington, and Pee Dee suggest that the preachers had found openings to the southward, had scaled the mountain wall on the west, and that already Methodism was keeping step with the march of empire.

As we turn the yellowed leaves of the early Minutes of the Conferences we find indications here and there of the development which was going on unceasingly. New plans were being tried; the Wesleyan methods which had served so well in England were being adjusted to the changed conditions of the new country.

The "great iron wheel" spun fast in 1775 when certain city preachers were to exchange appointments each quarter, others "at half the year's end," and still others "as often as the assistant thinks proper." A year or two later, 1777, in consequence of abuses in the preaching of funeral sermons, the preachers decided to "inform every society that we will not preach any but for those who, we have reason to believe, died in the fear and favor of God."

The first itinerants concerned themselves little about this world's goods. They were generally young and unmarried, and as their long circuits and daily preaching appointments kept them in the saddle, they had no need for parsonage comforts. In 1778 the Conference appointed two stewards or treasurers for the connection, William Moore and Henry Fry, and fixed a uniform salary or "quarterage" of £8,

Virginia currency, for the traveling preachers. The Fluvanna section of the Conference of 1779 decided that "no preacher who is able to travel and does not" should receive quarterage, and declared furthermore that "those preachers



FROM THE PLATE IN WINSOR'S "HISTORY OF AMERICA."

MAP OF UNITED STATES, PUBLISHED IN 1785.

Showing the divisions according to the ordinance of 1784. The plate appeared in Francis Bailey's Pocket Almanac for 1785, published at Philadelphia.

who receive money by subscription" should be viewed "as excluded from the Methodist Connection." The Northern session of this same year confirmed Asbury as "general assistant," with practically absolute authority, at the same time requiring the traveling preachers "to meet the classes" wherever possible. One question in the Minutes of this Conference shows how early the American Methodists began to turn their attention to the care of the young. It runs,

“What shall be done with the children?” And the answer is, “Meet them once a fortnight, and examine the parents with regard to their conduct toward them.”

The Minutes of the Conference at Baltimore in 1780 note, “All the preachers to change after six months.” One question and answer made it the duty of the assistant to establish uniformity and security in the method of “settling all the preachinghouses by trustees,” who should “meet once in half a year and keep a register of their proceedings.” All the deeds of trust must be modeled after the improved Wesleyan form. Each traveling preacher was required to take a license from Asbury at each Conference, and furthermore the local preachers and exhorters were “strictly enjoined that no one presume to speak in public” without frequent examination “by the assistant with respect to his life, his qualifications, and reception.”

If the foregoing enactments are stamped with the personality of Francis Asbury, what shall be said of those which follow:

Question 11. “Ought not all our preachers to make conscience of rising at four, and if not, yet at five (is it not a shame for any preacher to be in bed till six in the morning?)” Answer: “Undoubtedly they ought!”

One question is reminiscent of the then living subject of the sacraments. It granted to all the friendly clergy of the Church of England the privilege “to preach or administer the ordinances in our preachinghouses or chapels” at the request of the people.

The next question touches a fresh problem. Until this time most of the preachers had been young men and bachelors. When a man married he usually dropped out of the Conference. But this question of 1780 reads: “What pro-

vision shall we make for the wives of married preachers?" and is literally answered: "They shall receive an equivalent with their husbands in quarterage, if they stand in need."

This Conference adopted more rules than any of its predecessors. One paragraph made it the duty of the preachers "to speak to every person, one by one, in the family where they lodge, before prayer, if time will permit; or give a family exhortation after reading a chapter."

For a body assembled south of Mason and Dixon's Line these men spoke very freely upon a delicate subject:

Question 16, "Ought not this Conference to require those traveling preachers who hold slaves to give promises to set them free?" was answered "Yes!" as was Question 17: "Does this Conference acknowledge that slavery is contrary to the laws of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society, contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others should do to us and ours? Do we pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom?"

To the question, "Do we disapprove of the practice of distilling grain into liquor? Shall we disown our friends who will not renounce the practice?" the answer was "Yes."

That some of the preachers on Southern circuits had been perplexed by conditions there is betokened by Question 25, providing that the assistant "should meet the colored people himself, and appoint as helpers in his absence proper white persons, and not suffer them to stay late and meet by themselves."

The Conference of 1781, the first after the threatened secession, began at Choptank, Del., and ended at Baltimore, Md. The preachers pledged themselves "to preach the old Methodist doctrine and strictly enforce the discipline," and

“firmly resolved to discountenance separation.” The one year’s trial of preachers was doubled, “considering how young they are in age, grace, and gifts,” and restrictions were set upon the custom of itinerants in calling local preachers into the regular work without consulting Asbury “or the elder assistants.”

The preachers were bidden “to examine every person admitted on trial for three months, first, whether they have been turned out;” if so, they were not to be received without full evidence of repentance.

In one question of this year we detect the germ of a course of Conference studies: “Ought not the preachers often to read the Rules of the Societies, The Character of a Methodist, and The Plain Account of Christian Perfection, if they have got them?” Answer: “Yes.” Another innovation, which savors of Asbury’s orderly nature, required the assistant “to give a circumstantial account of the circuit, in writing, both of societies and local preachers, with a plan, to his successor” The circuit preacher was also to notify the several societies of their apportionment for raising the preacher’s salary, “and urge them to give according to their several abilities.”

The Conference of 1782 adopted a well-considered plan for the exchange of the preachers at the end of six months. The Conference of 1774 had authorized a general collection at Easter “to pay chapel debts and relieve needy preachers.” In 1775 it was ruled that the superintendent’s deficiencies should be paid out of the yearly collection, as well as the preachers’ expenses from Conference to their new appointments. But in the Minutes of 1782 for the first time the amount of “the yearly collection,” £42 16s. 3d., is given. It had been expended “on the necessities of the preachers.”

“To revive the work” it was decided to hold evening meetings and preach in the mornings in places convenient.

That money was already accruing as the result of the sales of Wesleyan books appears from the provision that each preacher should report to Conference the amount of support received, that the deficiency might “be supplied by the profits arising from the sale of the books, and the Conference collections.”

Measures were taken to silence irregular preachers, and to guard the societies from private impostors every newcomer professing to be a Methodist must show a certificate from his former preacher.

This Conference “disannulled” the former divisive action with regard to the sacraments, and indorsed Asbury as president of the Conference and general head of the work in America.

The married preachers received further attention at the Conference of 1783, when the sum of £206 was apportioned to be raised for the wives of the preachers; namely, “Sisters Forrest, Mair, Wyatt, Thomas, Everett, Kimble, Ellis, Watters, Haggerty, Pigman, and Dickins.” The apportionments ranged from £4 to £30.

The struggle with the slaveholders was still on. Extreme measures against slaveholding local preachers were postponed a twelvemonth, the assistants meanwhile “to deal faithfully and plainly with each one and report to the next Conference.”

The temperance utterance was growing more emphatic. “By no means should our friends be permitted to make spirituous liquors, sell, and drink them in drams. We think it wrong in its nature and consequences; and desire all our preachers to teach the people by precept and example to put away the evil.”

The close of hostilities with England was encouraging immigration. The American Conference resolved to receive no alleged European Methodists without proper credentials. Two of the quarterly fasts, as appointed in the previous year, were at this Conference changed to "days of thanksgiving for our public peace, temporal and spiritual prosperity, and for the glorious work of God."

For the second time two general stewards were named, the men being "Samuel Owings and John Orick."

The Minutes of the regular Conference of 1784, as distinguished from the General Conference or constitutional convention which met at Baltimore at Christmastide, exhibited a number of new features. In case of emergency, and in the absence of Asbury, any three assistants might "call to account, change, suspend, or receive a preacher till Conference." In places where the work "appeared to grow worse every year" it was decided to give up preaching, "the preacher only to meet society in the evening or speak to the black people." A yearly subscription for chapel debts, etc., was to be taken throughout the connection, "every member that is not supported by charity to give something."

By frequent and faithful precept and consistent example the preachers must labor to prevent "superfluity of dress among our people."

Members who buy slaves, to hold them as such, should, after fair warning, be turned out, "and permitted to sell on no consideration." The slaveholding local preachers in Virginia might be borne with for one year more, but those of the other States must be suspended. Slaveholding preachers who "refuse to manumit their negroes, where the law permits," must be employed no more.

The next point was new and practical: To reform the

singing, "let all our preachers who have any knowledge in the notes improve it by learning to sing true themselves, and keeping close to Mr. Wesley's tunes and hymns."

An annual public collection was "to be taken in all the principal places on the circuits and brought to Conference."

The number of preachers' wives was now thirteen, to whom £302 was appropriated for support, the money to be collected and paid quarterly. The general assistant (Asbury) was to receive a salary of £24 annually with his expenses for horses and traveling. The new question, "What preachers have died this year?" is followed by the names of William Wright and Henry Metcalf, without a word of eulogy.

A policy was adopted toward British Wesleyan applicants for admission to the American Conference. If recommended by Wesley, and subject to Asbury and the American Conference, "we will receive them; but if they walk contrary to the above directions, no ancient right or appointment shall prevent their being excluded from our connection."

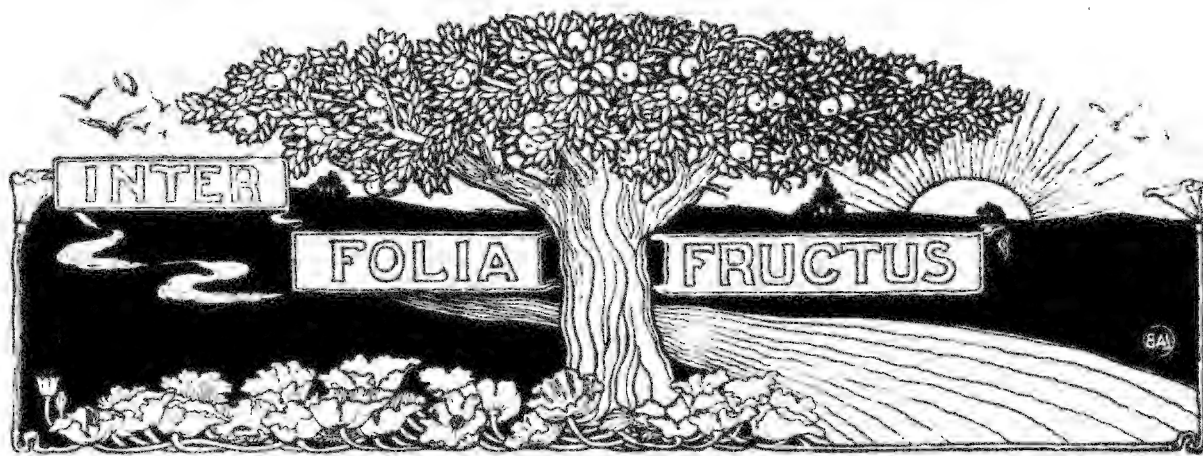
From these fragments of legislation we can draw some conclusion concerning the spirit of American Methodism during this period of trial and formative influences. It was outspoken, beyond the moral standard of its generation, against the twin iniquities, slaveholding and dram selling. Its preachers were under strict discipline, and immediately responsible to Asbury. The itinerant principle was in such active operation that the preachers were rather traveling evangelists than settled pastors, the place of the latter being supplied by local preachers and class leaders. Services for the negroes were authorized and the regular instruction of the young was recommended.

A study of the appointments of the several Conferences of this period reveals the names of one hundred and fifty-three

traveling preachers, the number enrolled in any single year ranging from the original ten of 1773 to eighty-four in 1784. Of those who took part in Rankin's first Conference (1773) Francis Asbury alone remained. Of his English colleagues, Rankin, Shadford, Wright, and Yearbry had left the country, Strawbridge and Williams had died, Whitworth had backslidden, and King had located, as did Watters, the only American.

The membership of the societies had increased as rapidly as the number of preachers. In 1776 the American Methodists equaled in number the Lutherans, the German Reformed, the Reformed Dutch, the Associate Church, the Moravians, or the Roman Catholics. During the war they increased with great rapidity, and at its close stood fourth or fifth in the list of Christian denominations in America. Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia were still the main support of Methodism. These States contained, in 1784, a great majority of its members and as large a proportion of its sixty or more chapels. Outside of the metropolis, New York, Methodism was still undeveloped, and in New England no real beginning had yet been made. Far from being the end of the American societies, the protracted war actually conduced to the extension of Methodism; for during this agitated period many persons migrated to the back settlements. Among those who went West were converts, and even local preachers, and at the restoration of peace the itinerants sought out these wanderers and formed circuits which included the frontier settlements. Thus the year 1783 saw two thousand persons added to the society and eleven new circuits opened: two in Maryland, three in western Virginia, and six in North Carolina, while New York and Norfolk were restored to the list.

The hotbed of Methodism was among the homogeneous population of the peninsula between the great bays of Delaware and Chesapeake, where the Methodist preachers had overrun all Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia. Already the first of the great Methodist army of the West had received marching orders, and the first notes of the swelling chorus of Methodist prayer and praise had been heard on the head waters of the Ohio and in the valleys of the Blue Ridge.



CHAPTER XXVII

Religion in the Young Republic

RESULTS OF THE WAR.—FREEDOM.—THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.—PRESBYTERIANS AND OTHER SECTS.—THE ROMAN CATHOLICS.—FRENCH THOUGHT.—LOW STATE OF MORALS.

THE War of Independence revolutionized religious conditions in America. Its first effects were disastrous. In New England, where the ministers were generally patriotic and where active military operations were restricted to a comparatively small area along the seaboard, the suffering was least; but in the lower colonies, where clerical opinion was divided and where hostile armies were frequently afoot, the distress was acute. Many patriotic Presbyterian and Reformed ministers saw their churches ruthlessly desecrated or destroyed, while the clergy of the Church of England, generally British in birth and sympathy, left their flocks untended and fled to the royal garrisons.

It was a dozen years after the war before the churches recovered from the losses, disorganization, and spiritual apathy which it engendered. General bankruptcy and an unsettled currency had culminated in the hardest of hard times; partisan feeling was never so acrid; and in their anxiety over the affairs of this world men lost their concern

for the interests of the next. The worst feature of all, however, was that the frequent and friendly intercourse with France, which had continued since the dark days of the war, now had its menacing sequel in the introduction of the cur-

rent French infidelity, and its presentation to the rising generation of Americans in peculiarly seductive guise.

Notwithstanding this luxuriant crop of tares there was good grain in the harvest of the war, and to no religious body did more substantial benefits accrue than to the feeble folk who under the name of



FROM THE ENGRAVING BY J. U. BOTTING.

REV. SAMUEL PROVOOST, D.D.

First Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New York.

Methodists had come up through great tribulation. As the popular ideas of freedom and equality became embodied in the constitutions and laws of the new States the privileges of the older religious organizations were lopped off one by one, as in New England, or swept away at a stroke, as in Virginia. In Massachusetts a man must still be taxed to support the "Church of the standing order"—the Congregational—unless he could prove that he was an attendant upon some other recognized religious service. But in most of the States full toleration was almost immediately granted; and even

Jews and Roman Catholics were not long denied equal rights before the law

In 1784 the leading denominations of Christians in the United States were as follows: the Congregationalists, who had New England pretty much to themselves save in Rhode Island, where the followers of Roger Williams were impreguably intrenched; the Baptists, whose devoted missionaries were penetrating into every white settlement, the Friends, of Pennsylvania and the adjoining States; the Presbyterians and various Reformed Churches of the Middle States; and the Church of England, to which the favor of royal charters and governors had secured a prestige, especially in New York and the Southern cities, quite out of proportion to its numbers. The Roman Catholics had a precarious foothold, with Maryland as their chief center. The Moravians had settlements in Pennsylvania and North Carolina, and the Huguenots were in South Carolina, on the coast of Maine, and in localities near New York. The Lutherans were strongest in Pennsylvania, New York, and Delaware. Methodist preachers were active from North Carolina to New York, but there was still no organized Methodist Church. Preachers and members alike were hoping for the hour of a solid and enduring organization.

Until the Revolution the English Church in America was attached to the diocese of London, and had no resident bishop. The war swept away its revenues, its privileges, and most of its parish clergy, and left the remnant unable to ordain a ministry and embarrassed by its connection with the Church of England. Independent organization was an imperative necessity

The Rev Samuel Seabury, of Connecticut, was consecrated bishop by the Scottish bishops on November 14, 1784, and in

February, 1787, two other distinguished ministers, the Rev William White, of Philadelphia, and the Rev. Samuel Provoost, of New York, were ordained in London to the episcopacy. They represented a convention of the principal clergymen of the Middle States, and in 1789 Seabury's enterprise



FROM THE ENGRAVING BY J. C. BUTTNE

SAMUEL SEABURY.

Ordained by the Scottish bishops Protestant Episcopal
Bishop of Connecticut and Rhode Island.

was united with theirs and the Protestant Episcopal Church was fairly organized. Still so nearly lifeless were the churches of this order that their own historian, in reviewing the years from 1789 to 1811, calls this "the period of suspended animation."

The Presbyterians were greatly depleted by the war, which ravaged their strongholds. Their first General As-

sembly was held in Philadelphia in May, 1789, and the denomination went forward upon its great historic development. If it failed to keep pace with one or two other Churches in following the course of Western immigration, it was because its fidelity to the traditions of an educated ministry restricted the supply of ministers. No missionaries in the Western country excelled the young graduates of Princeton and Yale in their zeal for the Gospel, and especially for the establishment of Christian education in the new region beyond the mountains.

The Baptists, long used to persecution, spread with amaz-

ing rapidity as soon as the law gave them liberty, and their indefatigable missionaries gained an early and permanent foothold in the West and Southwest. In 1792 they had 891 churches and 65,345 members, including more than four hundred churches in the South and more than sixty beyond the Alleghanies.

In New England the Congregationalists continued for a generation without much change. Their growth in numbers was slow, but external forces and internal movements were preparing a great transformation for the descendants of the Puritans.

One half of the 30,000 Roman Catholics in America in 1784 were in the State of Maryland. They had deserved well of their country by their sacrifices during the war, and they eagerly welcomed the tolerant principles which accompanied it. Until now they had been subject to the vicar apostolic of London. In 1784 they petitioned the pope for an American superintendent. The Rev John Carroll, of Baltimore, was appointed "superior," and in 1789 was consecrated bishop. Two years later the first Roman Catholic synod in America met at Baltimore. Within the next decade the membership of the Church rose to 100,000, being greatly augmented by immigrants from Ireland and refugees from France.

With these and the numerous minor ecclesiastical organizations at work the religious welfare of the young republic would appear to have been assured. But the spiritual condition of the Churches was lamentably low. Unbiased witnesses agree in this opinion. The great awakenings of Whitefield and Edwards and the Tennants were only a memory. Revivals of religion were rare in the older Churches; and the colleges, founded as seminaries of religion, were

infected with skepticism to an alarming degree. There were but two professing Christians among the students of Princeton about 1784, and ten years later it was the custom for Yale students to call themselves by the names of the noto-

rious infidels of England and France who were their heroes.

As the French Revolution progressed societies were formed in this country for propagating its principles, including its hostility to Christianity. Baird says: "Wild and vague expectations were everywhere entertained, especially among the young, of a new order of



REV. JOHN CARROLL.

Archbishop of Baltimore. The First Roman Catholic bishop in the United States.

things about to commence, in which Christianity would be laid aside as an obsolete system."

Outside of the pulpit the educated classes were generally friendly to the radical ideas, and the pamphlets of Thomas Paine and his French contemporaries were read with equal eagerness in the stockades of Kentucky and by the sons of New England deacons.

The private letters, newspapers, and court records of this period prove that the twenty years following the war was "a

time of the lowest general morality in American history " The Churches lamented conditions which they seemed powerless to control. In 1779 the Presbyterian synod publicly be-



AFTER WELCH'S ENGRAVING FROM THE DRAWING BY LONGACRE.

WILLIAM WHITE, D.D.

First Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania.

moaned "the great and increasing decay of vital piety, the degeneracy of manners and the prevalence of vice and immorality throughout the land."

In the name of "liberty"—the god of the time—the Sabbath was desecrated, the Bible blasphemed, and the most sacred rites of Christianity derided. The baneful influence

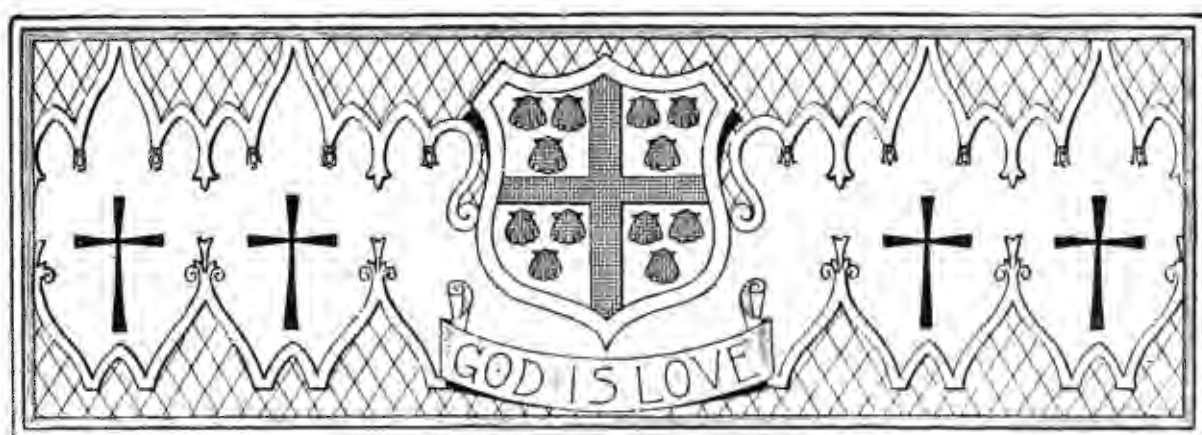
of France further showed itself in the weakening of the matrimonial tie, and in the prevalence of dueling as a means of personal redress of wrong.

The habit of moderate drinking, which had been general before the war, was frightfully extended when the returning veterans brought home the intemperance of camp life. Drunkenness became a national characteristic, the only redeeming feature of the situation being found in the fact that its horrors called forth the first temperance agitation.

The outlook for the old Thirteen Colonies—now aspiring States—appeared gloomy indeed, in spite of the conservative influences of their past and the restraining power of Churches and ministers. But the situation was immensely complicated when the conclusion of peace with Great Britain and the subsequent purchase of Louisiana flung open the gateways of the West.

New communities were formed in a day. Vast territories and great States were populated by a sweeping wave of migration at a time when the older moral and religious forces seemed spent, and inadequate even for the duty that lay at their doors. A new force and a new system were needed to save the West for Christianity, and, without derogation of the noble work of her sister Churches, it must be said that the new and exquisitely adapted instrument of Providence was found in the system of itinerant preachers which John Wesley had instituted in England, and which was now ready to go forth to great conquests under the direction of the apostolic Asbury.

The time for the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States had fully come.



CHAPTER XXVIII

"A Bishop as Much as Any Man"

ORDINATION OF WHATCOAT AND VASRY—WESLEY'S GROWING SYMPATHY WITH AMERICA.—THE UNTIRING COKE. CHARLES WESLEY'S FRUITLESS PROTEST.

I N August, 1784, the Bishop of London received a letter from "his lordship's dutiful son and servant, John Wesley," which must have made his episcopal earstingle with indignation and his fingers itch for such an instrument of discipline as his predecessors had sometimes used for the correction of impertinent and refractory priests. It would appear that the bishop had refused to ordain an applicant who wished to preach in America, saying, with an islander's ignorance of continental vastness, "There are three ministers in that country already." Whereupon Wesley remarks upon the territorial extent of America, and the character of the English ministers there, who might know "something of Greek and Latin, but knew no more of saving souls than of catching whales." He continues: "Also I mourn for poor America, for the sheep scattered up and down therein. Part of them have no shepherds at all, particularly in the northern colonies; and the case of the rest is little better, for their shepherds pity them not. They cannot, for they have no

pity on themselves; they take no thought or care for their own souls."

That a way of relief for the American societies was preparing itself in his mind appears from the following passage in a letter which John Wesley had written to his brother Charles, June 8, 1780: "Read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*, or any impartial history of the ancient Church, and I believe you will think as I do. I verily believe I have as good a right to ordain as to administer the Lord's Supper. But I see abundance of reasons why I should not use that right unless I was turned out of the Church. At present we are just in our place."

We have already referred to Wesley's intimate acquaintance, through correspondence with his helpers in America, with the political conditions of the country. Naturally this carried with it an equal familiarity with the religious state of the colonies. Here Asbury was the wise, cautious, and accurate correspondent. Never did British cabinet or hierarchy have a representative in the colonies who traveled so widely or touched the popular life so closely as the loyal Methodist itinerant, Francis Asbury. Wesley knew, and felt as only a good Churchman could feel, the spiritual destitution of a people whose ecclesiastical system, poor enough at best, had been broken down by war.

Immediately after the restoration of peace Asbury's mind reverted to the cherished thought of bringing Wesley over to survey the ground and make plans for its development. One of his letters of this period is preserved. He had already urged upon his venerated superior the vastness of the field, the restlessness of the people bereft of the Church sacraments, and the inadequacy of the preaching force at his command. In this letter he says: "We are greatly in need of help. A

minister and such preachers as you can fully recommend will be very acceptable. Without your recommendation we shall receive none. But nothing is so pleasing to me, sir, as the thought of seeing you here; which is the ardent desire of thousands more in America."

But the time for Wesley's long-cherished plan of crossing the ocean was past. He was in his eighty-first year, and was beginning to say, "I am on the verge of the grave, and know not the hour when I shall drop into it." Indeed his preparations were already making for that final voyage upon which he might at any moment be summoned to embark. This was the year, 1784, in which he assured the perpetuity of British Methodism by securing the incorporation of the Legal Hundred, to whom descended the power over the societies, chapels, and preachers which until now had been subject to his individual authority. While planning this momentous action he was developing a plan for establishing the American Methodist societies upon an independent footing of equal stability and supplying them with a regular ministry suited to their needs. The year which witnessed the perfection of both of these undertakings, has well been called "the climacteric of Methodism."

In February, 1784, Wesley summoned his most trusted English lieutenant to his study in City Road and opened to him his plans for the reorganization of the societies in America. He rehearsed to his friend the repeated appeals of Asbury and the American Methodists in general for ordained ministers. He adverted to the custom of the ancient Church at Alexandria, in accordance with which, on the death of a bishop, the surviving presbyters ordained from their own number by the laying on of their own hands. Finally he proposed to lay his hands in consecration upon this preacher

and to ordain him to the superintendency of the societies in America.

The young preacher upon whom the aged apostle leaned at this critical juncture was the Rev. Thomas Coke, an Ox-



FROM THE MINIATURE BY ELORIDGE.

REV. THOMAS COKE, LL.D.

The original painting is in the Wesleyan Mission Rooms, London.

ford scholar and a Church of England minister, who had lost his living some years earlier for preaching evangelical sermons, and who had since flung himself into the Methodist movement with an ardor which has rarely been equaled even

among men distinguished for the intensity of their zeal for religion. "Doctor" Coke—for his Oxford doctorate (Doctor of Civil Law) was never lost sight of by the early Methodists, for whom academic degrees then possessed the charm of rarity—was now in his thirty-seventh year, having been born at Brecon, in Wales, in 1746. His father was a tradesman of some means, a local magistrate, and was able to send the only son to Oxford, where he was entered at Jesus College to be regularly trained for the ministry of the Anglican Church, in which his parents were communicants. Not long after taking his bachelor's degree, in 1768, he became curate of South Petherton, a rural parish in Somersetshire. He was ordained deacon in 1770, and priest in 1771. His university conferred the M.A. degree upon him in 1770, and honored him with its doctorate of law in 1775. The young clergyman was a wiry, dark-haired man, below the medium height, and possessed of an energy and determination which won Wesley's cordial admiration.

Coke's zealous labors in his obscure parish set the gossips to whispering that the rector was tainted with Methodist heresy, and a neighboring clergyman, Thomas Maxfield, who had been one of Wesley's earliest lay preachers, sought him out and opened to him the evangelical doctrine. The minister's transition to Methodism cost him his pulpit. His own church bells, chiming him triumphantly out of little South Petherton, really chimed him into the cosmopolitan parish of which John Wesley was the divinely appointed rector. The first meeting of the two men took place at Kingston, August 18, 1776, "when," says Wesley, "a union began which I trust shall never end." A year after his dismissal from his pulpit, in 1777, he was enrolled in the Wesleyan Conference, where he at once took the chief ap-

pointments, and was assigned to important services in all parts of the realm.

Sometimes Coke's preaching was of overwhelming power, and in executive force his excellence was undisputed. Wesley, keen judge of character that he was, early chose this fiery



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY REV. W. H. MEREDITH.

PRIORY CHURCH, BRECON, WALES.

Where Coke and his parents attended.

young minister for his "right hand," as he himself afterward declared. By his delegated authority Coke presided over the Irish Conference of 1782, and so frequently in the years following that he has been called "its usual president." His heart went out to all the nations that sat in darkness, and his mind was full of plans for missionary effort in foreign lands. As early as 1784 he drew up "A Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Missions among the Heathen," and collected £66 3s. for the furtherance of its objects; thus tak-

ing the initial steps leading to the founding of the Methodist Missionary Society, which was not formally organized, however, until some years later. It was this young man, of such liberal education, untiring energy, and apostolic spirit, whom John Wesley had determined to send out to America as shepherd to the sheep scattered abroad in the far-off wilderness.

In subsequent years Coke was as unwearied in travel and preaching as either Wesley or Whitefield. In addition to his close attention to Methodism in Ireland he was as much at home on sea as on land. He crossed the Atlantic eighteen times, organized the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, and planted that large group of Wesleyan missions in the West Indies which became the admiration of the whole Protestant world. To personal labors he added financial ability, and, as Stevens justly says, "gave more money to religion than any other Methodist, if not any other Protestant, of his times."

The British Wesleyan Conference of 1784 met at Leeds. Wesley's mind was now fully made up regarding America. He believed that the societies required ordained preachers. The Anglican bishops having denied his requests for the ordination of helpers for America, another way must be provided. And, being long since persuaded that he was himself as much a bishop as any man in England, he was not long in finding a way. At the Leeds Conference Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, two faithful lay itinerants, with honorable and successful records, offered themselves to accompany Coke on his mission to the American Methodists. At the end of August they repaired to Bristol to take ship for the scene of their labors. Coke was there, and also the Rev. James Creighton, another friendly Church of England minister. On Wednesday, September 1, Wesley, who was also present on an important errand, made this entry in his Journal: "Being now clear in

my own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed, and appointed three of our brethren to go and serve the desolate sheep in America, which I verily believe will be much to the glory of God."

The innocent word "appointed," which thus appears in



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY REV. W. J. MEREDITH.

THE PARISH CHURCH, SOUTH PETHERTON, ENGLAND.

Where Dr. Coke was minister when he joined the Methodists.

Wesley's entry in his Journal, covered a series of acts for which many High Churchmen can never forgive their perpetrator, simple and natural and readily defensible as they are on grounds of expediency, Scriptural warrant, and ecclesiastical precedent. With the assistance of the Rev James Creighton and the Rev. Thomas Coke, both presbyters of the Church of England, he ordained to the diaconate his two lay preachers, Whatcoat and Vasey. On the following day he consecrated the same two to act as presbyters or elders in America, by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper,

and he set apart Coke to act as "superintendent" of the Methodist societies in America. He then dispatched them to America with the following "letters testimonial:"

To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late Fellow of Lincoln College in Oxford, Presbyterian of the Church of England, sendeth greeting

Whereas many of the people in the southern provinces of North America who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the usage of the same Church; and, whereas, there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers;

Know all men that I, John Wesley, think myself to be providentially called at this time to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory, I have this day set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands, and prayer (being assisted by other ordained ministers), Thomas Coke, Doctor of Civil Law, a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 2d day of September, in the year of our Lord 1784. JOHN WESLEY.

Similar certificates were given to Whatcoat and Vasey. The following address to the American preachers was drawn up:

BRISTOL, September 10, 1784.

To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America:

By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from the mother country and erected into independent States. The English government has no more authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the congress, partly by the State assemblies, but no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice, and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.

Lord King's account of the primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right by ordaining part of our traveling preachers. But I have still refused; not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined as

little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belonged.

But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction; in America there are none, and but few parish ministers; so that for some hundreds of miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest.

I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard What-



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY REV. W. H. MEREDITH.

NAVE OF BRECON CHURCH.

The font at which Thomas Coke was baptized.

coat and Thomas Vasey, to act as elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper. And I have prepared a liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England (I think the best constituted national Church in the world), which I advise all the traveling preachers to use on the Lord's day, in all the congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

If anyone will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding these poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

It has, indeed, been proposed to desire the English bishops to ordain a part of our preachers for America. But to this I object: (1) I desired the Bishop of London to ordain one only, but could not prevail. (2) If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. (3) If they would ordain them now, they would likewise expect to govern them; and how grievously would this entangle us! (4) As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty both to follow the Scriptures and the primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free.

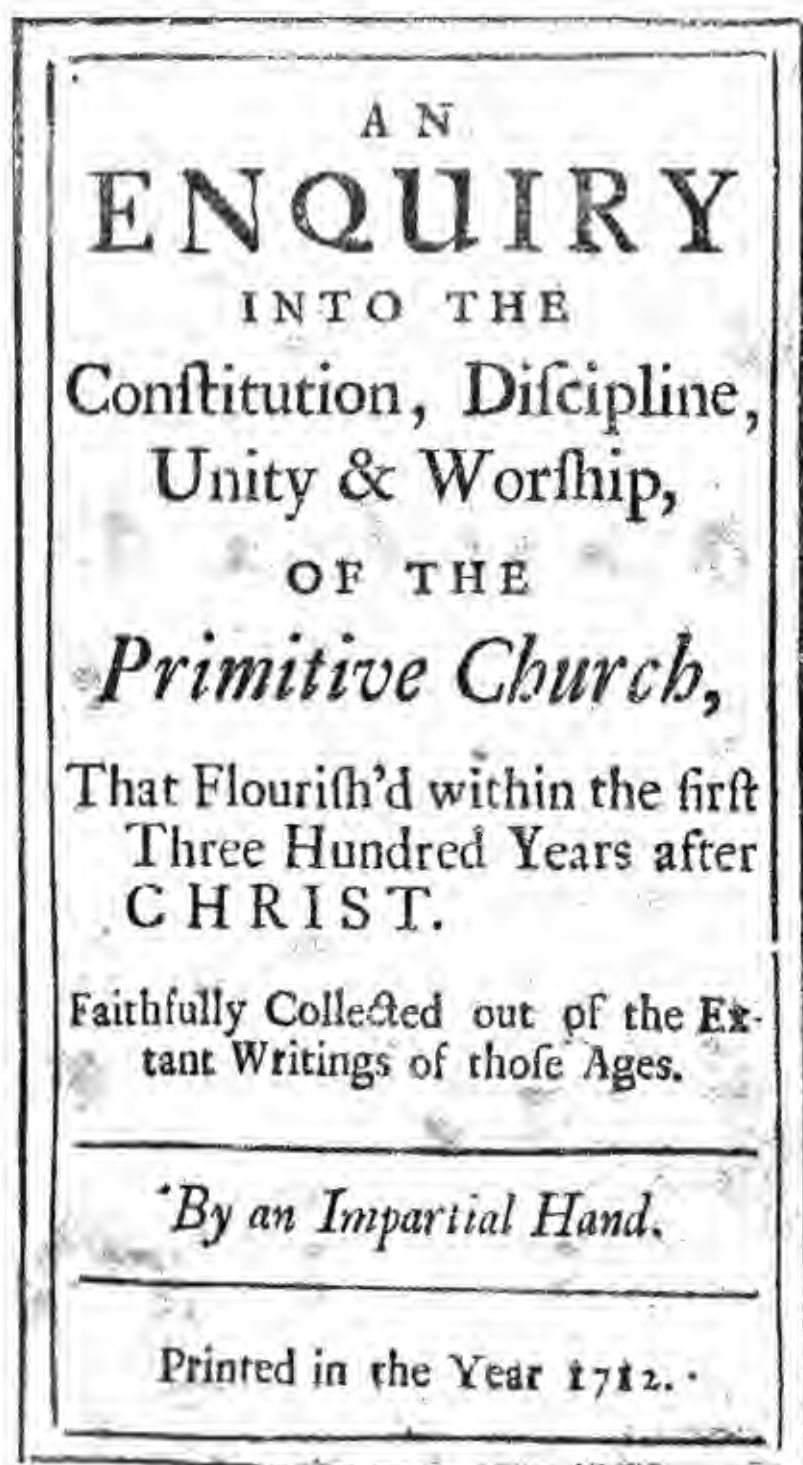
JOHN WESLEY.

“These are the steps,” says Wesley, in another place, “which, not of choice but necessity, I have slowly and deliberately taken. If anyone is pleased to call this separating from the Church, he may!”

The Bristol ordinations, however necessary and right, were a shock to many in England. One of the preachers wrote: “Ordination among Methodists! Amazing indeed! Surely it never began in the midst of a multitude of counselors; and I greatly fear the Son of man was not secretary of state, or not present, when the business was brought on and carried. Years to come will speak in groans the opprobrious anniversary of our religious madness for gowns and bands.”

In the following spring Charles Wesley, jealous Churchman that he was, and who had never lost his dread of separation from the Church of England, wrote a letter to the Rev Dr Chandler, an Anglican clergyman then embarking for America, in which he laments his brother's act in the most emphatic terms. He has “robbed his friends of their boasting and left an indelible blot on his name as long as it shall be remembered.” Of himself he exclaims, “I have lived on earth a little too long, who have lived to see this evil day!” Finally, he utters this lugubrious prophecy: “What will

become of these poor sheep in the wilderness, the American Methodists? How have they been betrayed into a sep-



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ORIGINAL FURNISHED BY REV. G. S. NUTTER.

TITLE OF KING'S PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

The book which sustained Wesley in his idea of the character of the episcopacy.

aration from the Church of England, which their preachers and they no more intended than the Methodists here! Had they had patience a little longer, they would have seen a real bishop in America.

There is not the least difference betwixt the members of Bishop Seabury's Church and the Church of England. He told me he looked upon the Methodists in America as sound members of the Church, and was ready to ordain any of their preachers whom he should find duly qualified.

His ordination

would be genuine, valid, episcopal. But what are your poor

Methodists now? Only a new sect of Presbyterians. And after my brother's death, which is now so near, what will be their end? They will lose all their influence and importance; they will turn aside to vain janglings; they will settle again upon their lees; and, like other sects of Dissenters, come to nothing."

So much for prophecy!

The Bristol ordinations for America do not stand alone. In each year of the succeeding five Wesley ordained one or more deacons and elders, and in one case a "superintendent," mostly for work in Scotland and foreign lands; though several, notably Rev. Henry Moore and Rev Thomas Rankin, sometime of America, were assigned to duty in England.

In August, 1785, when Wesley ordained three preachers, his brother Charles wrote to him in much the same strain as his September deliverance to Dr. Chandler. His fear is that Coke will ordain the English preachers. "When once you began ordaining in America," he says, "I knew, and you knew, that your preachers here would never rest till you ordained them. His [Dr Coke's] Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore was intended to beget a Methodist Episcopal Church here. You know he comes, armed with your authority, to make us all Dissenters. One of your sons (in the Gospel) assured me that not a preacher in London would refuse orders from the doctor." The letter closed with an appeal to his brother, in the name of all that was venerable and dear, to check the course which must lead to separation from the Church.

John Wesley's reply is celebrated. He defended his claim to be "a spiritual *ἐπισκοπος* as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man did or can prove." He denied any

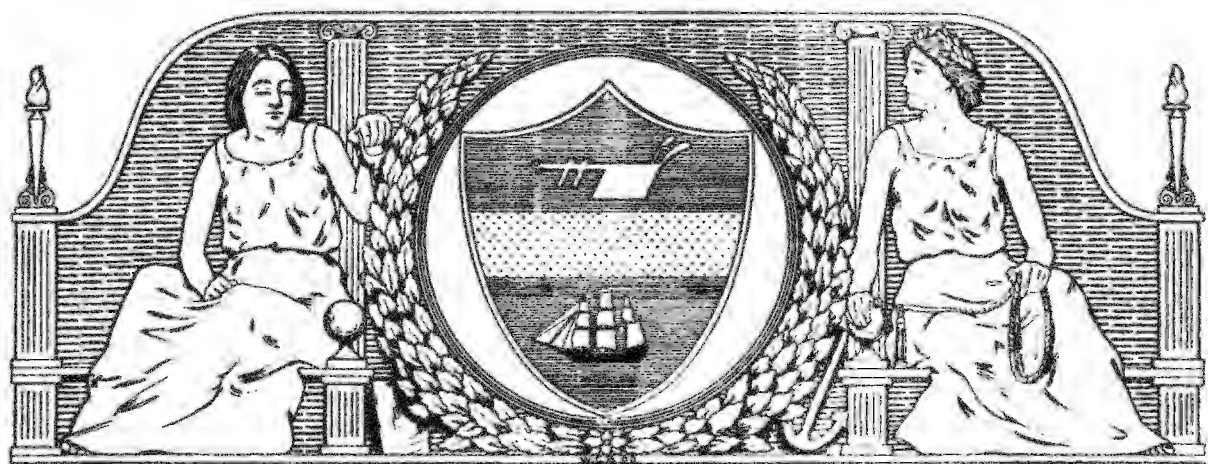
intention to separate from the Established Church. "I walk still by the same rule I have done for between forty and fifty years. I do nothing rashly. It is not likely I should. The high day of my blood is over. If you will go on hand in hand with me, do. But do not hinder me, if you will not help. Perhaps, if you had kept close to me, I might have done better. However, with or without help, I creep on; and as I have been hitherto, so I trust I shall always be,

"Your affectionate friend and brother,

"JOHN WESLEY "

Charles made prompt and frank reply, charging upon his brother responsibility for Coke's alleged "resolution to get all the Methodists of the three kingdoms into a distinct, compact body "

John Wesley answered in a few sentences, chiefly in defense of Dr. Coke, his "right hand." Charles returned to the charge in two later letters, but did not succeed in securing satisfaction.



CHAPTER XXIX

Off Like an Arrow

ENVOYS EXTRAORDINARY.—RICHARD WHATECOAT.—THOMAS VASEY.—
JOHN DICKINS.—THE MEETINGS IN NEW YORK.—ASBURY AND COKE
AT BARRATT'S CHAPEL.

AT ten o'clock in the morning of September 18, 1784, the three Wesleyan envoys, Coke, Whatecoat, and Vasey, set sail from Bristol in the ship *Four Friends*, Parrot, master, for New York. After the first four days of misery the passengers "were preserved," writes one of them, "in great temperance of body and peace of mind." The captain and crew treated the clerical passengers with great civility. The zealous preachers had public prayers morning and evening, and preached twice on the Sabbath. The evenings were spent in reading Christian biography and theological works. The ship was sorely buffeted by storm, and driven a thousand miles out of her course. It was not until November that the *Four Friends* sighted Sandy Hook, and on the 3d of the month the three companions landed in New York.

Coke was the youngest of the trio, and their official superior and natural leader. He stepped ashore as the designated superintendent of the American Methodist Episcopal Church.

which he had Wesley's instructions to organize. He was just entering his thirty-eighth year. Whatcoat, destined to be one of his successors in the general superintendency, was fully ten years his senior, while Vasey, the third American Methodist minister, was a little older than Coke.

At the age of thirteen young "Dick Whatcoat," a Gloucestershire lad of humble origin, was apprenticed to learn a trade. His father's death had left the care of a houseful of children to a pious mother, and her instructions and example were not lost upon this son. At the age of twenty-one he came under the influence of the Methodist preachers and after some months of debate and struggle became an earnest believer. The work of grace deepened with the years, until, as he says, his soul "was drawn out and engaged in a manner it never was before. Suddenly I was stripped of all but love."

Following the usual Methodist progression toward the itinerancy, he became band leader, class leader, and steward of the society at Wednesbury, and naturally passed to exhorting and preaching among the villagers and rustics. The Lord so evidently honored the work that young Whatcoat ventured to offer himself to Wesley for the regular ministry. To his joy he was accepted, and for fifteen years, from 1769, he labored with zeal and success upon circuits in England, Ireland, and Wales.

When the urgent call for missionaries came to the Conference at Leeds, in August, 1784, it was George Shadford, the faithful evangelist of the Virginia revival, who, recognizing the fitness of his friend Whatcoat for such service, sought him out and urged him to take up his cross and go. Seafaring had only terrors for this middle-aged landsman, and the work before him promised to be arduous in the extreme, compli-

cated as it was with political relations and international hatred and prejudice. Even the event of success implied lifelong exile for the missionary. Whatcoat could not decide for himself, but after a day of fasting and prayerful meditation the answer came to him and he volunteered to go with Coke.

From his portrait (which is reproduced later) and the descriptions of his friends we form a picture of this grave comrade of the impetuous Coke. He was somewhat above medium stature, neither thin nor corpulent, with a rounded face, dark and brilliantly lighted eyes, and dark hair, which hung in graceful waves behind, and was cropped square above his open brow. Gravity, courtesy, and dignity marked his manner toward all, and the spiritual fires which warmed and lighted his character were apparent in his bearing and conversation. "So much divine majesty and luster appeared in him," says Phœbus, "it made the wicked tremble to behold him. His whole deportment was beautiful and adorned with personal graces. His amiable, heavenly, and courteous carriage was such as to make him the delight of his acquaintances. He was a man of fortitude; he appeared to fear no danger when duty was plain, believing that he who walks uprightly walks safely." Bangs declares that his distinguished characteristic was "a meekness and modesty of spirit which, united with simplicity of intention and gravity of deportment, commended him as a pattern worthy of imitation." Learned he was not, save in one Book and in the things of the Spirit, but he was utterly unworldly, and had that purity of heart which opens heaven to the spiritual eye. An aged Christian who had heard him in youth remembered to his dying day with what power he could stir an audience when preaching on personal holiness. Stevens says, with

his usual discrimination, "Richard Whatcoat was one of the saintliest men in the early itinerancy of Methodism."

The subsequent vacillations of Thomas Vasey have made



FROM J. THOMSON'S ENGRAVING AFTER JACKSON'S PORTRAIT.

REV. THOMAS VASEY.

The ordained companion of Coke and Whatcoat.

him a less heroic figure than his colleagues among the Methodist pioneers. But his character was not without excellences. He had been early left an orphan, but was the ward and destined heir of a wealthy and childless uncle. In the face of his guardian's displeasure he had joined the Methodists,

and had turned his back on the world and the delights of wealth by becoming a Wesleyan preacher. He was an itinerant of nine years' service when the Macédonian call came to the preachers at Leeds and touched his sense of duty. He volunteered, was accepted, and with Whatcoat received ordination at Wesley's hands, at Bristol, in the first days of September. He sailed with the others two weeks later for the western world. After two years of faithful service in the itinerancy there he seems to have wavered in his faith in the validity of his orders. Bishop White, of Philadelphia, of the newly organized Protestant Episcopal Church, reordained him, and on returning to England Vasey accepted a curacy in the Church of England. His heart, however, yearned for his old associations, and in 1789 we find him welcomed back into the Wesleyan fold, where his churchly orders were fully utilized in the societies in the ministration of the sacraments. He grew old in the service, and died a loyal Methodist, and an octogenarian pensioner of the Conference, in 1826.

There was no august committee of reception waiting on the pier when the consecrated bishop of the nascent Church and his two colleagues said "good-by" to Captain Parrot and walked down the gangplank of the *Four Friends* and stood for the first time on American soil. They inquired of a bystander the way to the Methodist preachinghouse—for the fame of the little Wesley chapel in John Street had long before crossed the Atlantic. They were directed, instead, to the house of Stephen Sands, watchmaker, local preacher, trustee, and joint treasurer of the Methodist society, where the storm-tossed travelers at once "found themselves in a region of hospitality and friendliness."

The preacher in charge at New York in 1784 was John Dickins, the sagacious man whom Asbury had stationed there

to repair the waste of war in the society. The news of the arrival of such visitors, upon what errand he would be the first to guess, brought him in haste to the watchmaker's house. To him first, therefore, Coke unfolded Wesley's plans for the organization of the Methodist societies in America as a Church under a system of efficient superintendents, and the immediate ordination of the American lay itinerants. Dickins, who had been one of the movers of the project of the Southern preachers at the Fluvanna Conference of 1779, to supply the lack of ordained ministers by ordaining some of their own number, listened eagerly to the recital and gave it his hearty approval. So confident was he that it would satisfy Asbury and the itinerants generally that he urged Coke to publish the plan at once through the societies. The doctor, however, deemed it prudent to withhold the details of the arrangement until he should have consulted with Asbury, the recognized head of the Wesleyan Connection in America.

On the third day after his arrival in New York Coke departed for Philadelphia, not, however, without preaching twice or thrice to the little flock in the John Street Chapel. Philip Embury had long lain in his up-country grave, and good Barbara Heck was far away in Canada, but there were doubtless those among Coke's hearers whose minds went back from the polished preaching of the Oxford scholar to the night when dame Barbara rebuked the godless crew and extorted from the reluctant carpenter the sermon from which so many date the beginnings of American Methodism.

The Philadelphia Methodists gladly received the English strangers who came in Wesley's name, and Coke's education and ministerial standing won for him especial attention from the Anglican ministers. His first Sunday discourse in America

was delivered from the pulpit of St. Paul's, where Asbury's friend, McGaw, was now rector. In the evening he addressed the Methodists in their own house—St. George's. Dr. White, one of the most eminent Episcopal clergymen in Pennsylvania, and soon to be its first bishop, and Dr. McGaw paid him marked attention, and he was presented to the governor of the State.

On Thursday, the eighth day since their landing, the three ministers again set off southward, in a borrowed wagon, traveling toward the heart of Methodism in quest of its head, Francis Asbury, who was reported to be on the tour of the Delaware circuits.

At Dover they were received by that honored Methodist, Richard Bassett, the liberal patron of the preachers in that section, and at his table they first fell in with that notable young evangelist, Freeborn Garrettson, who at once impressed Coke as "an excellent young man, all meekness, love, and activity." His prophetic eye may well have seen in the sturdy young American a worthy pillar of the noble ecclesiastical edifice whose foundations he was about to lay.

Some miles from Dover, amid rural surroundings, stood Barratt's Chapel, a brick building of two stories, which, since its erection four or five years previously, had been considered the finest country chapel in American Methodism. This historic building was the scene of a quarterly meeting of the neighboring circuits on Sunday, November 14. As was usual on such occasions, a number of preachers and a great throng of men, women, and children attended from miles around.

Coke rode out to this chapel in the woods to preach the morning sermon. He tells us that he had "a noble congregation," and discoursed on "the Redeemer as our wisdom,

righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." One who was present on that auspicious occasion afterward wrote: "While Coke was preaching Asbury came into the congregation. A solemn pause and deep silence took place at the close of the sermon, as an interval for introduction and salutation. Asbury and Coke, with hearts full of brotherly love, approached, embraced, and saluted each other. The other



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY ALDEN W. QUIMBY

BARRATT'S CHAPEL (INTERIOR.)

Showing old altar rail, and the pulpit where Coke and Asbury met for the first time in America.

preachers at the same time were melted into sympathy and tears. The congregation also caught the glowing emotion, and the whole assembly burst into tears. I can never forget the affecting scene. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered by the doctor [Coke] and Whatcoat to several hundreds, and it was a blessed season to many souls." Coke's own account of the memorable meeting is picturesque and to the point: "After the sermon a plain, robust man came up to me in the pulpit and kissed me. I thought it could be

no other than Mr. Asbury, and I was not deceived." Of the sacramental service that followed he declares "it was the best season I ever knew, except one "

Asbury's Journal entry on the events of this Sabbath was characteristically matter-of-fact: "I came to Barratt's Chapel. Here, to my great joy, I met those dear men of God, Dr Coke and Richard Whatcoat. We were greatly comforted together. Having had no opportunity of conversing with them before public worship, I was greatly surprised to see Brother Whatcoat assist by taking the cup in the administration of the sacrament." He had known and loved Whatcoat, in the years of his English labors, as a fellow lay preacher, and he was still ignorant of the Bristol ordinations and the plans which these Wesleyan envoys were charged with executing.

That afternoon the two earnest men talked long together: the Oxford clergyman who carried in his pocket Mr. Wesley's credentials as the first Protestant bishop in the New World, and the plain-spoken preacher in homespun, the acknowledged leader of the societies in America. In the course of this conversation the ardent Coke unfolded to the prudent Asbury the full details of the new plan of a Methodist Episcopal Church furnished with an ordained ministry of bishops, elders, and deacons. To Asbury, who was to be the episcopal colleague of Coke, the news gave great surprise. "I was shocked," he writes, "when first informed of the intention of these my brethren in coming to this country. It may be of God. My answer then was, 'If the preachers unanimously choose me, I shall not act in the capacity I have hitherto done by Mr. Wesley's appointment.' The design of organizing the Methodists into an independent Episcopal Church was opened to the preachers present, and it was

agreed to call a General Conference, to meet at Baltimore the ensuing Christmas; as also that Brother Garrettson go off to Virginia to give notice thereof to the brethren in the South." It must be borne in mind that so large had been the expansion of Methodism in the South that in 1784 seven eighths of the preachers lived south of Mason and Dixon's Line.

When Coke exhibited his credentials authorizing the consecration of Asbury as joint superintendent of the new Church, the latter exclaimed, "Doctor, we will call the preachers together, and the voice of the preachers shall be to me the voice of God." Coke also notes that Asbury would take no step without consulting the American brethren, and concludes, "We therefore sent off Freeborn Garrettson like an arrow, from north to south, directing him to send messengers to the right and left and to gather all the preachers together at Baltimore on Christmas Eve."

Whatever might be the decision of the General Conference in regard to these revolutionary proposals, Asbury proceeded to utilize the English clergymen to the utmost. Coke was not to be allowed to rust in idleness, during the six weeks which must elapse before Christmas, while the societies were crying out for the services of an ordained minister.

Asbury fitted out the Oxford doctor with a good horse, loaned him his own colored body servant, Harry Hosier, himself an eloquent exhorter, and on the verge of winter sent him out on a circuit of eight hundred or a thousand miles among the preaching stations of Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He was received with delight throughout the peninsula, making the acquaintance of preachers and laymen, baptizing hundreds of infants and adults, and preaching twice a day, often in the forest amid novel

surroundings. "Perhaps," he notes in his diary, "I have in this tour baptized more than I should in my whole life if stationed in an English parish." In one chapel—Tuckahoe—the singing gave him especial pleasure; at Annamessex the number of saddle horses standing about tied to trees, while he preached, impressed him deeply. The gentry of Delaware and the Eastern Shore entertained him in their fine homes. Coke's guide and faithful companion in these wintry rides was himself a character of note. Harry Hosier was a short and intensely black negro, whose eyes were of unusual brilliancy. Though he could neither read nor write, he had a rare gift of eloquence, and his sermons were appreciated by audiences without distinction of color. Asbury used to say that experience had taught him that the best way for him to draw a crowd was to advertise that "Black Harry" would preach. Frequently it was arranged that Harry should speak at the evening service, which was likely to be thronged with slaves, and his ability to sway the emotions of such an assembly was undisputed. Before they had traveled together a fortnight Coke declared that, in spite of his ignorance of book learning, Harry Hosier was "one of the best preachers in the world."

While Coke was studying the conditions of the work in America some of the American preachers were taking a close look at him. The war was too fresh in their minds to allow them to be prejudiced in favor of a Briton, Oxford scholar and Wesley's right hand though he might be. Perhaps that true patriot, Thomas Ware, expressed the first thought of many a hardy pioneer preacher when he wrote of the dapper little clergyman, "His stature, complexion, and voice resembled those of a woman rather than those of a man; and his manners were too courtly for me." But longer and closer

association convinced his brethren of his sagacity and force, while his praise of the character and institutions of the infant republic, and his frankly expressed admiration and veneration of Asbury, eventually conciliated the favor of nearly all.

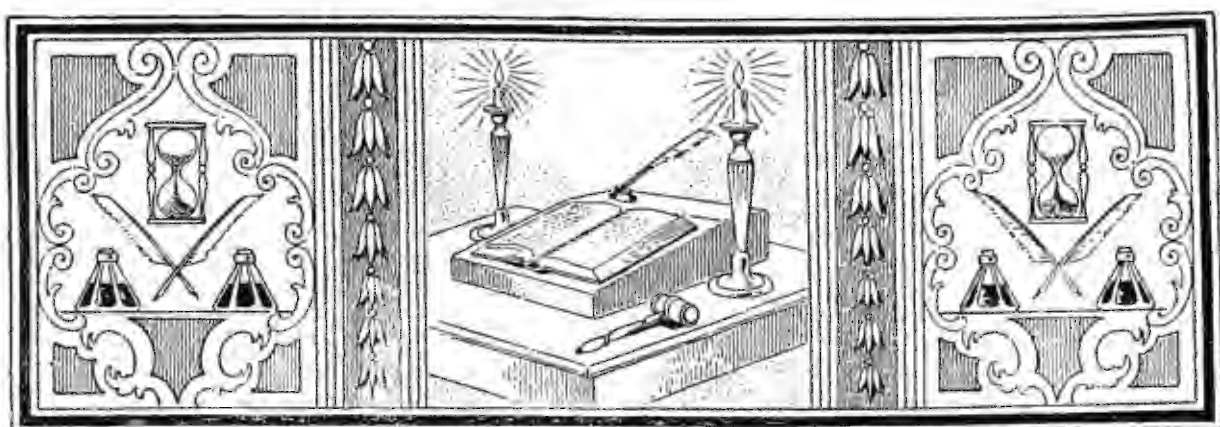
Meanwhile Asbury was pursuing his round of visitation among the societies west of the Chesapeake, introducing Whatcoat and Vasey to the work. From his Journal it appears that the momentous business of the approaching General Conference concerned his thoughts frequently and profoundly. He finds the preachers generally inclined to approve the plan for an independent Church. For himself, the honor of being officially named superintendent "did not tickle" his fancy, as he says. Experience had acquainted him with the metal of which the American preacher was made, and with his ingrained ideas of discipline and his hopes for the future of the work he could not expect the episcopacy to yield honor, or anything else except unceasing and thankless toil. Consequently we find him, on the eve of the critical step, giving up days and nights to fasting and prayer. He seeks the counsel of the older preachers. It is interesting to read that he had "an interesting conversation" with a clergyman—Church of England, doubtless—"on the subject of the episcopal mode of Church government."

Freeborn Garrettson, the herald who was sent "off like an arrow" with a commission "to go through the continent to summon the preachers" to General Conference, did his work well. "A tedious journey I had," he says, but "my dear Master enabled me to ride about twelve hundred miles in six weeks, and to preach, going and coming, constantly."

By the middle of December many of the Methodist preachers were on their way to Baltimore—a long journey

from the extreme portions of the work, which had now spread from the Hudson River to the Carolinas.

For a week previous to Christmas Day Asbury and the three Englishmen were entertained at Henry Gough's hospitable mansion—Perry Hall, fifteen miles from Baltimore. In this colonial seat, "the most spacious and elegant" dwelling which Coke had seen since the landscape of Britain sank below the horizon, the details of the plan of Church organization were prepared for submission to the preachers, and the "larger Minutes" of the British Wesleyan Conference were revised and edited into a draft of a Methodist Episcopal Book of Discipline.



CHAPTER XXX

The Christmas Conference a Meeting of Destiny

THE LEADERS: ASBURY AND COKE.—THE STIR IN BALTIMORE.—ASBURY THE DECISIVE CHARACTER.—JOHN DICKINS AND OTHER NOTABLE CHARACTERS.

EARLY in the morning of Friday, December 24, 1784, a little company of serious men rode out through the grounds of Perry Hall and along the highway to Baltimore. There was Asbury, in deep meditation, wholly devoted to the cause, but resolved to be guided in his decision by the wishes of his American brethren. There was Coke, nervous, impatient of delay, and eager to set in operation the ecclesiastical organism which Wesley and he had devised. There were Whatcoat and Vasey, zealous to promote the highest interests of Wesleyan Christianity. There was young William Black from Nova Scotia, providentially sent to arouse the missionary ardor of the infant Church. No doubt there were others, tried and faithful itinerants, to whom the doors of the Gough mansion always stood open. They might well wonder what their leaders would do at the Conference now about to be held, to which the preachers, far and near, had been summoned in hot haste.

The Methodist folk of Baltimore were already astir. Many humble householders in the city were proud to entertain the

preachers who for a week past had been arriving from their distant fields of labor, and from scores of family altars that



FROM THE "METHODIST MAGAZINE," LONDON, 1809

morning went up an earnest prayer that the work which that day was to inaugurate might be for the glory of God.

The preachinghouse in Lovely Lane had been prepared for the sessions of the constitutional convention—for such it was, rather than a Methodist Conference of the usual sort. It

was now ten years since this chapel was erected; almost exactly ten years since its fresh walls had echoed with the eloquence of the one-eyed redcoat, Captain Webb. Thoughtful for the comfort of the preachers, the people had somewhat softened its austerity for the midwinter assembly by setting up a large wood stove in the auditorium and adding backs to the cushionless benches.

About sixty of the eighty or more American preachers were in their places at ten o'clock in the morning of Friday, December 24, when the first session of the Christmas Conference—so called because it sat at Christmastide—was formally opened with the invocation of the divine blessing and a ringing Wesleyan hymn of praise. A few were doubtless detained by the inclemency of the weather, the stress of poverty, and the long distance to be traversed from their appointments. The most conspicuous absentee was Jesse Lee, then in the far South, who was inclined to blame Garrettson, the herald, for not reaching him earlier with the summons to attend.

The roll of the Christmas Conference is difficult to reconstruct. Stevens assures us of the presence of the following preachers: Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, Richard Whatcoat, Thomas Vasey, William Black, Freeborn Garrettson, James O. Cromwell, William Gill, Reuben Ellis, Le Roy Cole, Richard Ivey, James O'Kelly, John Haggerty, Nelson Reed, John Dickins, William Glendenning, Jeremiah Lambert, Francis Poythress, Joseph Everett, William Phœbus, and Thomas Ware. To this list Atkinson adds the names of John Smith, Caleb Boyer, Ignatius Pigman, Edward Drumgole, Ira Ellis, Jonathan Forrest, Lemuel Green, and William Watters, who had married and was just retiring from the active ministry

As Coke, himself under forty, looked out from his place as chairman over the men in black coats and homespun who sat before him on the benches, he was impressed by their youth. Asbury, who was of the eldest, had not yet turned his fortieth year, and William Watters was only thirty-three. These two veterans were the only links between the first Conference of the



MEMORIAL TABLET, MARKING THE SITE OF THE LOVELY LANE MEETING HOUSE, BALTIMORE, MD.

American preachers, held by Thomas Rankin at Philadelphia in 1773, and this convention of 1784. Perhaps half a dozen of the members of the Christmas Conference had traveled as long as eight years, but the majority of those present had been recruited within the past quadrennium. Scarcely one in six was a married man.

Without exception the most notable figure in the Conference, the man in whom, under God, were bound up the destinies of the Church, was Francis Asbury. He had come to America when the work was in its feeblest stages, and by

his rigid enforcement of discipline, and insistence upon a circulation of the preachers and the necessity of pushing out into new fields, he had saved the Methodist societies from stagnation if not disintegration. He alone of the British Wesleyan missionaries who came out before the Revolution had faced the storm of war, and, confident of the triumph of the new nation and enthusiastically hopeful for its future, he had single-handed held the societies together through these trying times. He was what he had been when he crossed the sea, a layman—simply a Methodist traveling preacher—yet by the consent of his fellows he had continued to act as general superintendent, and every year to travel through the connection to inspect the work and devise plans for its extension. How the preachers viewed his labors is evident from a letter written by one of them, Edward Drumgole, to Wesley in 1783, when fears were rife among them that Asbury might be recalled to England: “The preachers at present are united to Mr. Asbury and esteem him very highly in love for his work’s sake, and earnestly desire his continuance on the [American] continent during his natural life, and to act as he does at present—to wit, to superintend the whole work and go through all the circuits once a year. He is now well acquainted with the country, with the preachers and people, and has a large share in the affections of both; therefore they would not willingly part with him.”

There was Garrettson, the herald of the Conference, young, hopeful, diligent, forceful, and refined, already a veteran in service though young in years. He was destined to extend the bounds of Methodism up the Hudson and westward toward the lakes. The superior of most of his associates in education and family connections, he was destined to become connected by marriage with one of the great colonial families

of New York and make his mansion a hospitable home for the preachers on the district of New York, of which he became the first presiding elder.

There was the Delaware tailor, William Gill, who had so informed his mind by reading and thought as to command no less a critic than Benjamin Rush, who pronounced him "the greatest divine he had ever heard." "I knew no one who had such depth of knowledge, both of men and things, as he possessed," wrote Jesse Lee, upon his untimely death in 1788. James O'Kelly, who was to be the first to rebel against the discipline of the new Church, was present at its birth—a man of warm heart and "fervent devotion," "very affecting" in his preaching, and "one of the most laborious and popular evangelists of that day." He was greatly beloved by his fellow-preachers, especially in the South, and his secession, eight years later, disturbed the loyalty of many.

A short, thick-set young man, alert of body and mind, and apt to indulge in argument, was Nelson Reed, a Marylander, now in his sixth year of a service which was to continue for nearly sixty years longer, until at his death, in 1840, he should be the oldest Methodist preacher in the world. He was a man of conspicuous talents as a preacher and administrator, and his unswerving independence and frankness of speech made him, if not in this Conference, at least in some of the General Conferences which succeeded it, the outspoken champion of the American preachers against Bishop Coke's disposition to manage the preachers on this side the water with as high a hand as Wesley carried among the British itinerants.

Few men who sat on the hard boards of the chapel in Lovely Lane through that chill December week were so respected by their fellows or have deserved so well of the

Church as the preacher in charge of the New York society, John Dickins. He was of English birth, and had the advantage of classical training at Eton College before he came to America. A scholarly man, of careful judgment and wise in counsel, he was also accounted powerful as a preacher of the Gospel, and even Asbury, who was not profuse of compliment, declared that "for piety, probity, profitable preaching, holy living, Christian education of his children, and secret closet prayer" his superior was hardly to be found in Europe or America. Until 1784 his work had been in the South, but after the war Asbury had set him to the difficult task of reviving the society in New York. His fertile mind was teeming with plans for the good of Methodism. Already he had discussed with Asbury the plans for a Methodist Latin school. He has the credit of originating the name of the Methodist Episcopal Church and securing its adoption at the Christmas Conference, and a few years later he was to be chosen first book steward and to give the last years of his life to the founding of that humble publishing house which has developed into the Methodist Book Concern.

William Glendenning, the eccentric Scotch preacher, was a man of quite another sort; one who dreamed dreams and saw visions. His erratic nature was ill suited to the new order. First he dissented from its discipline, and followed O'Kelly out of the connection, and finally he forsook its doctrines and became a Unitarian.

Strangely as it reads at this day, it is nevertheless true that not more than half a dozen of the members of the Christmas Conference had ever seen the western slope of the Alleghanies. The humble and pious Jeremiah Lambert, a native of New Jersey, was the first Methodist preacher who had been appointed (1783) to labor in that region, which the next

quarter century was to make the stronghold of American Methodism. This Conference was to recognize his grace and gifts as a pioneer by sending him out to the island of Antigua as a missionary, but failing health cut short his useful career. Francis Poythress was another of the pioneers who had penetrated to the new settlements on the Western waters and had braved perils of the Indians, and he was the first Methodist to carry the Gospel to the frontiersmen of Kentucky. He was of excellent Virginia ancestry, but a profligate whom the preaching of the good rector Jarratt had reclaimed. He was providentially to be the "apostle of Methodism in the Southwest," and to win the hearty approval of Asbury.

Maryland was the mother of Methodist preachers of the first generation, and many of the spiritual sons of Strawbridge and Watters assisted at the founding of the Church. Notable among them was William Phœbus, of Somerset County, Md.; a thoughtful preacher, who some years afterward located in the city of New York, where he practiced medicine. He had talents and taste for letters, and "for some time edited a magazine" which was circulated in the denomination.

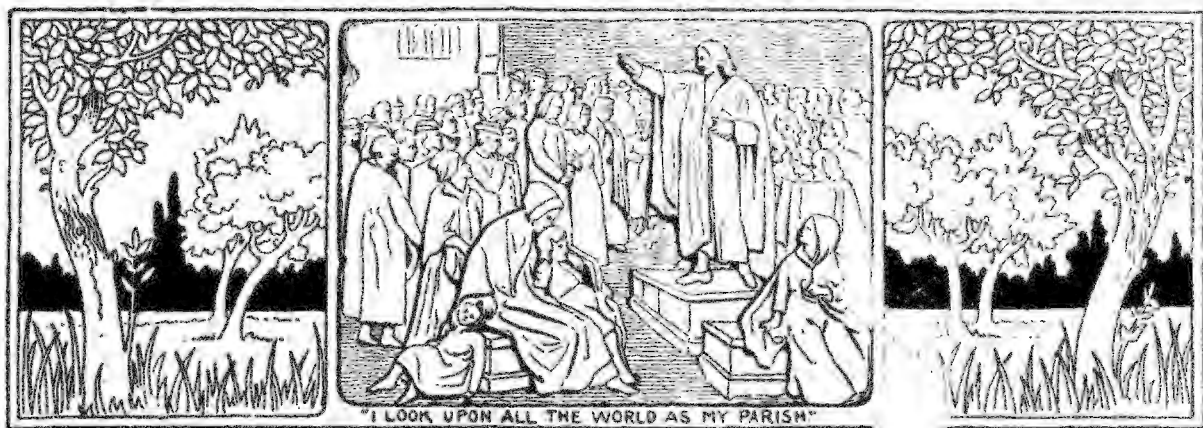
Le Roy Cole and Richard Ivey were two Virginians who had already given earnest of the faithfulness with which they were to serve the cause. Reuben Ellis, of North Carolina, was one of the less conspicuous members; a man of large frame, slow of speech, and of sure rather than brilliant parts. He was the type of many a brother since who has given himself unreservedly to the Lord's work without seeking the praise of men. John Haggerty was one of John King's converts in Prince George County, Md.; a man of commanding person, robust, erect, energetic, with prominent features and a noble, intellectual forehead.

Caleb Boyer, of Delaware, "the St. Paul of the denomination," who had been awakened by one of Garrettson's sermons under his father's own roof, was there. So was the ex-Papist, Edward Drumgole, who had come from Ireland fifteen years before with an introduction to Strawbridge; who was to introduce him to a personal Saviour.

In young Ira Ellis were capacities which, said Asbury, "had fortune given him the same advantages of education," would have ranked him with his fellow-Virginians, Jefferson and Madison.

It is doubtful if a rougher spoken man than Joseph Everett sat within sound of Coke's gavel. He had grown to manhood swearing, lying, and passionate, and, though belonging to a Church of England parish in Maryland, without ever having heard a Gospel sermon. "I chose a wife," says he, "who was as willing to go to the devil as I was." The Whitefieldites first touched him with a sense of sin, but the Calvinism confused him and threw him back into evil courses. He served in the patriot army and during the war came in contact with the Methodists, and thus into the light. He "studied divinity at the plow, ax, or hoe," and in 1780 was licensed to exhort. His exceeding hatred of sin and the sledge-hammer force of his rough eloquence were especially effective among the country people. He continued to thunder through the Middle States for thirty years.

Thomas Ware had been but one year in the itinerancy when the Conference met. He was one of Caleb Pedicord's converts in New Jersey, and was during a long life a steady light among the preachers. He died at Salem, N J, in 1842.



CHAPTER XXXI

Great Scenes in Lovely Lane

THE READING OF WESLEY'S COMMUNICATION.—PRO AND CON.—ADOPTION OF WESLEY'S PLAN.—A CHURCH ORGANIZED.—ASBURY CHOSEN GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT.—COKE'S SERMON.—ORDINATIONS.—A POPULAR MOVE.

THE devotion over, in the little chapel, the first business was to hear what Wesley had to say. Dr. Coke, as his representative, was chairman of the convention, and read the Bristol address "To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America." In it Wesley recited the extraordinary conditions to which the successful revolt of the English colonies had subjected the American societies. He asserted his spiritual power to ordain ministers, and announced the appointment of Coke and Asbury "to be joint superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders among them." Furthermore, he recommended to the preachers the modified liturgy of the Church of England. In conclusion, he presented four grounds of separation from the Church of England, and says: "They [the Americans] are now at full liberty both to follow the Scriptures and the primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in the liberty wherewith God has so strangely set them free."

Thomas Ware tells us that the letter was not only read, but "analyzed," and Asbury speaks of the Conference as "debating freely and determining all things by a majority of votes." The American preachers were evidently disposed to weigh carefully even Wesley's proposals.

On the first day of the session the preachers agreed without a dissenting vote to form themselves into "an episcopal



FROM AN OLD PRINT.

ASBURY'S CONSECRATION AS BISHOP.

Church, and to have superintendents, elders, and deacons." The Prayer Book of the Church of England, abridged and revised by Wesley, and entitled *Sunday Service for Methodists in America*, was adopted, and the ministers were to be ordained "by a presbytery, using the Episcopal form." Persons to be ordained were to be nominated by the superintendent, elected by the Conference, and ordained by imposition of hands of the superintendent and elders.

On the second day—which was Christmas—Asbury was

ordained deacon by Coke; Vasey and Whatcoat assisting. On the following day, Sunday, they ordained him elder, and on Monday, December 27, he was formally set apart as "superintendent;" his good friend Otterbein, the German minister of Baltimore, participating in the rite. Asbury had not accepted Wesley's appointment as authoritative, but had submitted the matter to the preachers, who unanimously elected him.

The sermon preached by Dr. Coke at the consecration of Francis Asbury to the office of superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church was printed in a pamphlet of twenty-two pages. The preacher spoke of the Anglican Church in America as follows: "The churches had in general been filled by the parasites and bottle companions of the rich and great. The humble and importunate entreaties of their oppressed flocks were contemned and despised. The drunkard, the fornicator, and the extortioner triumphed over bleeding Zion, because they were faithful abettors of the ruling powers. But these intolerable fetters were now struck off, and the antichristian union which before subsisted between Church and State was broken asunder." Further on he defended Wesley's authority to ordain, and said, "Besides, we have every qualification for an episcopal Church which that of Alexandria possessed for two hundred years; our bishops or superintendents (as we rather call them) having been elected by the suffrages of the whole body of our ministers throughout the continent, assembled in General Conference."

After dilating upon the influence of an irreligious bishop Coke turned to the newly made superintendent and exhorted him in glowing words: "But thou, O man of God, follow after righteousness, godliness, patience, and meekness. Be an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in

charity, in faith, in purity Keep that which is committed to thy trust. Be not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, but a partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God. Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Do the work of an evangelist and make full proof of thy ministry, and thy God will open to thee a wide door which all thy enemies shall not be able to shut. He will carry his Gospel by thee from sea to sea and from one end of the continent to another. O Thou, who art the Holy One and the True, consecrate this thy servant with the fire of divine love; separate him for thy glorious purpose; make him a star in thine own right hand, and fulfill in him and by him the good pleasure of thy goodness!"

The rest of the week was devoted to the formulation of a Discipline and the election of the preachers to be ordained—for by no means had all the new itinerants been received at once to ministerial orders.

We may judge safely of Coke's general impression of the American preachers, and especially of their justice in selection of candidates for their companionship in labors, by his own words: "I admire the American preachers. They are, indeed, a body of devoted, disinterested men, but most of them young. The spirit in which they conducted themselves in choosing the elders was most pleasing. I believe they acted without being at all influenced by friendship, resentment, or prejudice, both in choosing and rejecting."

The elders chosen for the United States were: John Tunnell, William Gill, Le Roy Cole, Nelson Reed, John Haggerty, Reuben Ellis, Richard Ivey, Henry Willis, James O'Kelly, and Beverly Allen. John Dickins, Ignatius Pigman, and Caleb Boyer were also chosen deacons. Three other elders were chosen and ordained for the missionary enter-

prises which were so near Coke's heart: Jeremiah Lambert, for service in Antigua, where Wesleyan Methodism had sprung up from a wind-borne seed, and Freeborn Garrettson and James O. Cromwell for especial service in Nova Scotia,



FROM A LITHOGRAPH.

REV. PHILIP OTTERBEIN.

Asbury's admirer and friend, who assisted at his consecration to the superintendency.

whose claims had been personally presented to the Conference. William Black, a young English-born Methodist, had been preaching faithfully in that British province, but his own education was sadly deficient and the field was growing

far beyond his power to direct it. In his distress for souls he turned to the American brethren for assistance, and chanced to arrive in Maryland at the very time when Coke, who was all on fire with missionary zeal, was about to meet the preachers in General Conference. His appeals were met with the offer of Garrettson and Cromwell, two highly efficient laborers, and in response to Coke's sermon £50 was raised among the preachers for the northern mission.

Black was deeply impressed with the spirit of the gathering. No doubt the generous response to his appeal for reinforcement in his own field added largely to his admiration of the Conference as a whole, when he could write: "Perhaps such a number of holy, zealous, godly men never met together in Maryland; perhaps not on the continent of America."

On the second Sabbath twelve elders and one deacon were ordained, and the Conference closed "in great peace and unanimity." Coke preached daily at noon, and other members preached morning and evening in the two Methodist chapels and in the Rev Mr. Otterbein's church.

Without question the most significant and far-reaching event of the Christmas Conference was the consecration of Asbury as general superintendent. Wesley had the best of reasons for his selection. First, we must bear in mind the confidential correspondence with Asbury himself, who in 1783 had written the following letter to Wesley: "No person can manage the lay preachers here so well, it is thought, as one that has been at the raising of most of them. No man can make a proper change upon paper to send one here and another [there] without knowing the circuits, and the gifts of all the preachers, unless he is always out among them. My dear sir, a matter of the greatest consequence now lies



PAINTED BY THOMAS COLE, R.S.A.

FROM THE STEEL ENGRAVING BY A. GILCHRIST (LONDON)

THE CONSECRATION OF FRANCIS ASHBURY AS A BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

before you. If you send preachers to America, let them be the proper persons. This I know, great men that can do good may do hurt if they should take the wrong road. I have labored and suffered much to keep the people and preachers together; and, if I am thought worthy to keep my place, I should be willing to labor and suffer till death for peace and union."

Of Asbury's relation to the American preachers Wesley was kept fully informed by other trusted correspondents. Perhaps the most important letter which reached him on this subject, and which may have finally decided him upon the selection of this remarkable man to lead officially, as already he had been leading practically, the new Church in the United States, was a letter of Edward Drumgole, in 1783: "The preachers at present are united to Mr. Asbury, and esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake, and earnestly desire his continuance on the [American] continent during his natural life, and to act as he does at present; to wit, to superintend the whole work, and go through all the circuits once a year. He is now well acquainted with the country, with the preachers and people, and has a large share in the affections of both; therefore they would not willingly part with him."

Next in importance to the official designation of Asbury to leadership in America we must reckon the first measure toward establishing a school for the young people of the new Church. John Dickins, with the Eton of his boyhood in mind, had already proposed a Latin school, and the time was now ripe for the measure. Accordingly, at the first General Conference, on New Year's Day, 1785, the project of a college was duly considered and approved. Asbury and Coke had already deliberated upon the measure and now gave it their

full sanction. The result was Cokesbury College, of which an account will follow in due order.

It cannot be questioned that there was doubt as to how the enactments of the Christmas Conference would be received by the Methodists throughout the country. The suddenness of the summons, the revolutionary declaration for a new Church, and the many important decisions of the Confer-



CORPORATE SEAL
OF THE METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN NEW YORK CITY,
ADOPTED 1789.

ence came with great surprise. But the reception of the news was most hearty and widespread. Watters declares: "We became, instead of a religious society, a separate Church. This gave great satisfaction through all our societies." Ezekiel Cooper says: "This step met with general approbation, both among the preachers and members. Perhaps we shall seldom find such unanimity of sentiment upon any question of such magnitude." Jesse Lee says: "The Methodists were pretty generally pleased at our becoming a Church, and heartily united together in the plan which the Conference had adopted; and from that time religion greatly revived."

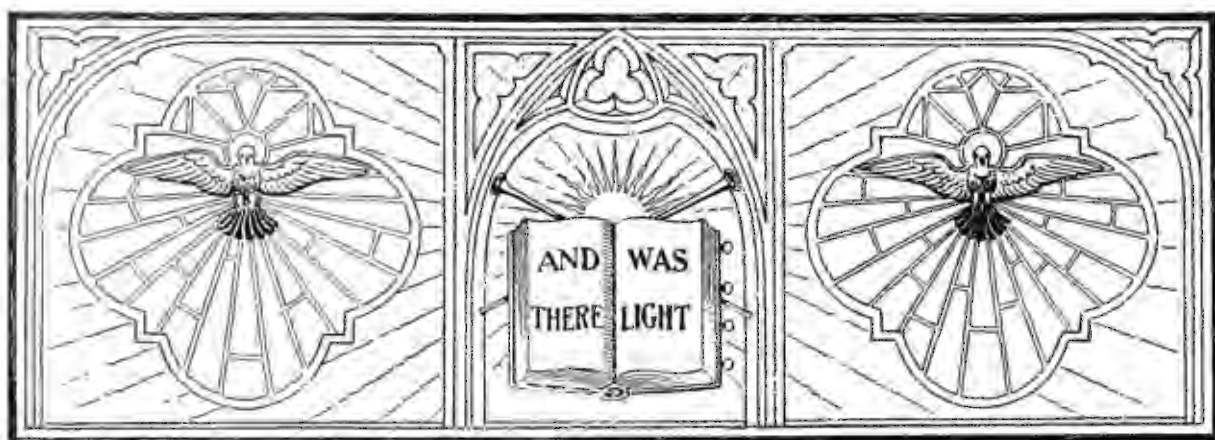
The Old Book, so called, of Wesley Chapel, in New York city, has several entries in 1785 which testify to the organic change which had transformed the scattered Wesleyan societies of America into a Church:

Jan. 8.	To 2 prayer-books for preaching house,	£0 13s. 0d.
" "	To cash paid for the altar-piece,	16 16 1

The "altar-piece" was probably the altar rail, now first introduced to accommodate those who communed. Hitherto the New York Methodists had attended Trinity, St. Paul's, or St.

George's Church for the sacrament. Coke's Journal alludes to this change: "We expected that this society would have made the greatest opposition to our plan, but, on the contrary, they have been most forward to promote it. They have already put up a reading desk and railed in a communion table." A few months later the same record speaks of the "trustees to the church"—a new name, verily, for Embury's modest preachinghouse!

As to the official appearance of a bishop, subsequent to the Christmas Conference, we have this testimony of Quin, then a young man, but afterward an honored preacher, who witnessed an ordination service at the Conference at Uniontown, Pa., in 1788. He says, "Mr. Asbury officiated, not in the costume of a lawn-robed prelate, but as the plain presbyter, in gown and band." Whatcoat, who assisted, wore "the same clerical habit." These vestments, however, proved totally unfit for the hard conditions of itinerant life, and were soon discarded, even by the bishop himself.



CHAPTER XXXII

The First American Episcopal Church

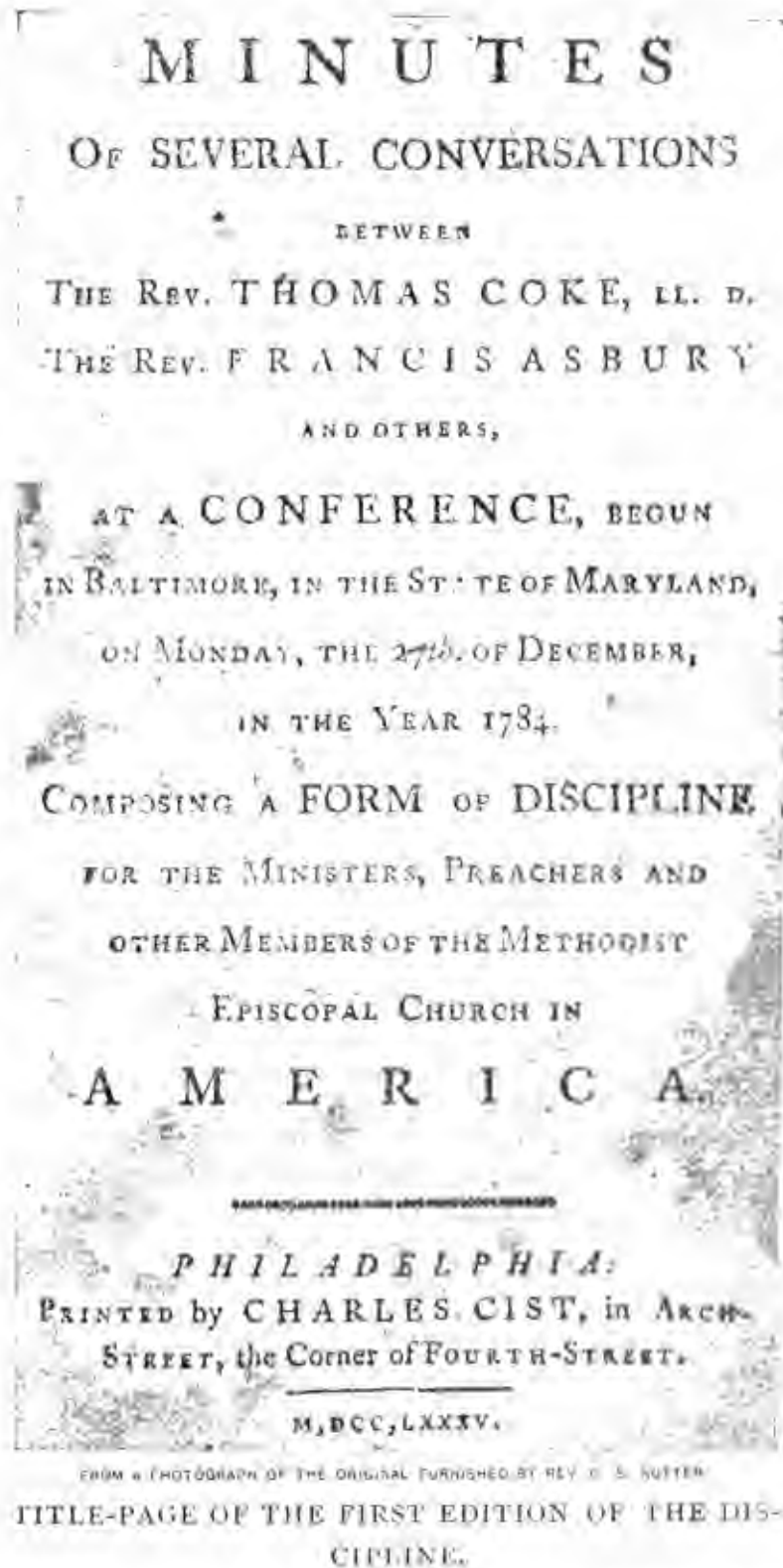
MEAGER REPORTS OF THE CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE.—THE SUNDAY SERVICE.—ARTICLES OF RELIGION.—OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.—SUPPORT OF THE PREACHERS.—THE ANNUAL CONFERENCES.

NO journal of the debates of the Christmas Conference has been preserved, and the recorded memories of those preachers who participated in its deliberations are lamentably meager. When good Father Ware, the last survivor among its members, published his recollections every detail had faded from his mind except the matter of the selection of a name for the new organization. For himself, he remembered that he would have been satisfied with "The Methodist Church," but when another brother—John Dickins, he believes was the man—proposed that it be called "The Methodist Episcopal Church" the brethren unanimously approved the suggestion. Thus the new body by its name proclaimed itself a Church, claimed connection with the "people called Methodists," whom the preaching of the Wesleys had raised up, and declared its form of government by general superintendents or bishops. In this wise, also, the taunt which careless Oxonians had flung at the method-

ically pious band of university students fifty years before became the denominational sign of the most numerous Protestant body in the world.

In the absence of a journal of the deliberations of the memorable Christmas Conference we must look to its enactments for a summary of its work. These are found in the first edition of the Discipline, or, to put it precisely, in the precious little pamphlet entitled Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., the Rev Francis Asbury, and Others, at a Conference, begun in Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, on Monday, the 27th of Decem-

ber, in the Year 1784. Composing a Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and Other Members of the Methodist



Episcopal Church in America. Philadelphia: Printed by Charles Cist, in Arch Street, the Corner of Fourth Street. M.DCC.LXXXV

The original basis of the first American Discipline was the so-called "Large Minutes" of the British Wesleyan Conference, a volume which Wesley had culled from the Annual Minutes of the Conference in England. The American societies had hitherto been governed in accordance with these Minutes, as modified from time to time to fit the conditions of the local work. From the "Large Minutes" and the Minutes of the American Conference (1773-1784) Coke and Asbury produced a body of rules and standards which the Christmas Conference approved and made official. With this were adopted A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for the Lord's Day, by the Wesleys, and the prayer book which Wesley had framed for America from the historic Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, and which bore the title, The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America, with Other Occasional Services. Besides the forms of public prayer, and the lessons to be read, the book contained "The Form and Manner of Making and Ordaining of Superintendents, Elders, and Deacons," and the "Articles of Religion." This bore the date, London, 1784. It appears that Wesley intended by means of this liturgy to preserve a bond of union between the Methodist Episcopal Church in North America and the mother Church of England, of which he ever considered the British Methodists a part. It was adopted by the Christmas Conference without dissent, and has never been legally abrogated. But its forms were not suited to the rough-and-ready work of a pioneer Church in a new country, and the multiplication of love feasts and similar irregular services so broke in upon its order that it

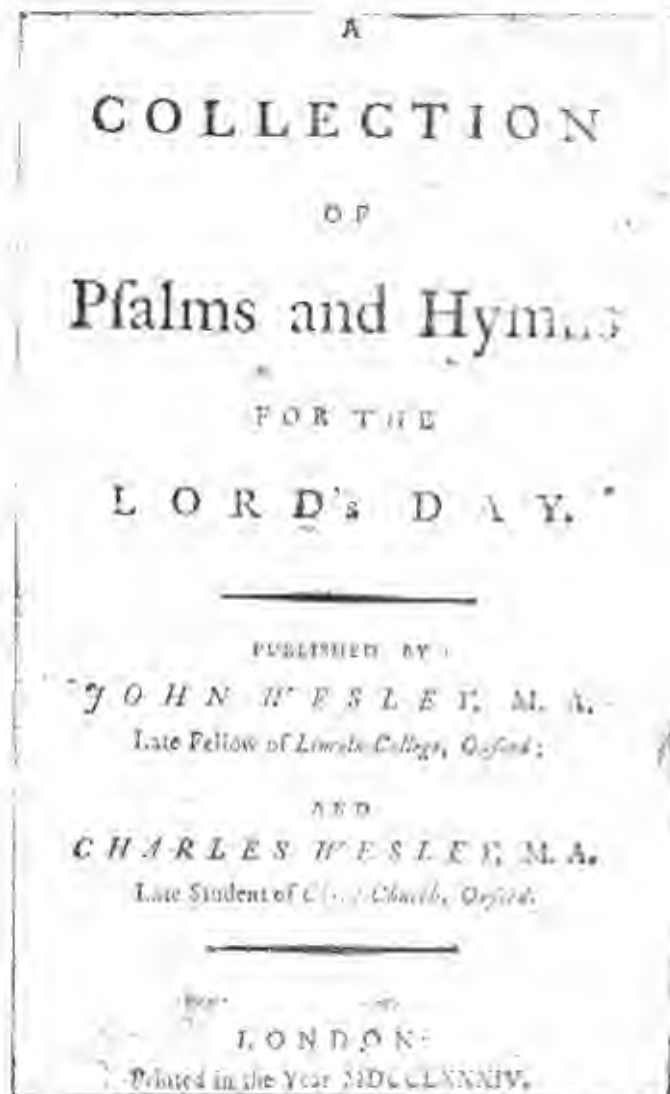
soon fell into disuse. Five editions of the service book have been noted (1784, 1785, 1786, 1788, 1792), but by the beginning of this century it had largely disappeared from the churches, and it is now scarcely a memory, though within recent years it has been reissued by the Book Concern in slightly modified form, and has found some acceptance. Copies of the earlier editions are among the prime rarities of American collectors.

The preface to *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* was dated Bristol, September 9, 1784—only a few days, therefore, before the newly ordained ministers sailed thence for the New World. In it Wesley says:

I believe there is no Liturgy in the world either in any Ancient or Modern Language which breathes more of a solid Scriptural rational Piety than the Common Prayer of the Church of England. And tho' the main work of it was compiled considerably more than two hundred years ago, yet is the Language of it not only pure, but strong and elegant in the highest degree.

Little alteration is made in the following Edition of it (which I recommend to our Societies in America), except in the following instances:

1. Most of the Holy-days (so-called) are omitted, as at present answering no valuable end.



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ORIGINAL, OWNED BY REV. C. S. HUTTEN.

WESLEY'S HYMN BOOK FOR AMERICA.

The hymnal used at first in the American Methodist societies.

2. The Service for the Lord's Day, the Length of which has been often complained of, is considerably shortened.
3. Some Sentences in the Offices of Baptism and for the Burial of the Dead are omitted; and
4. Many Psalms are left out, and many parts of the others, as being highly improper for the Mouths of a Christian Congregation.

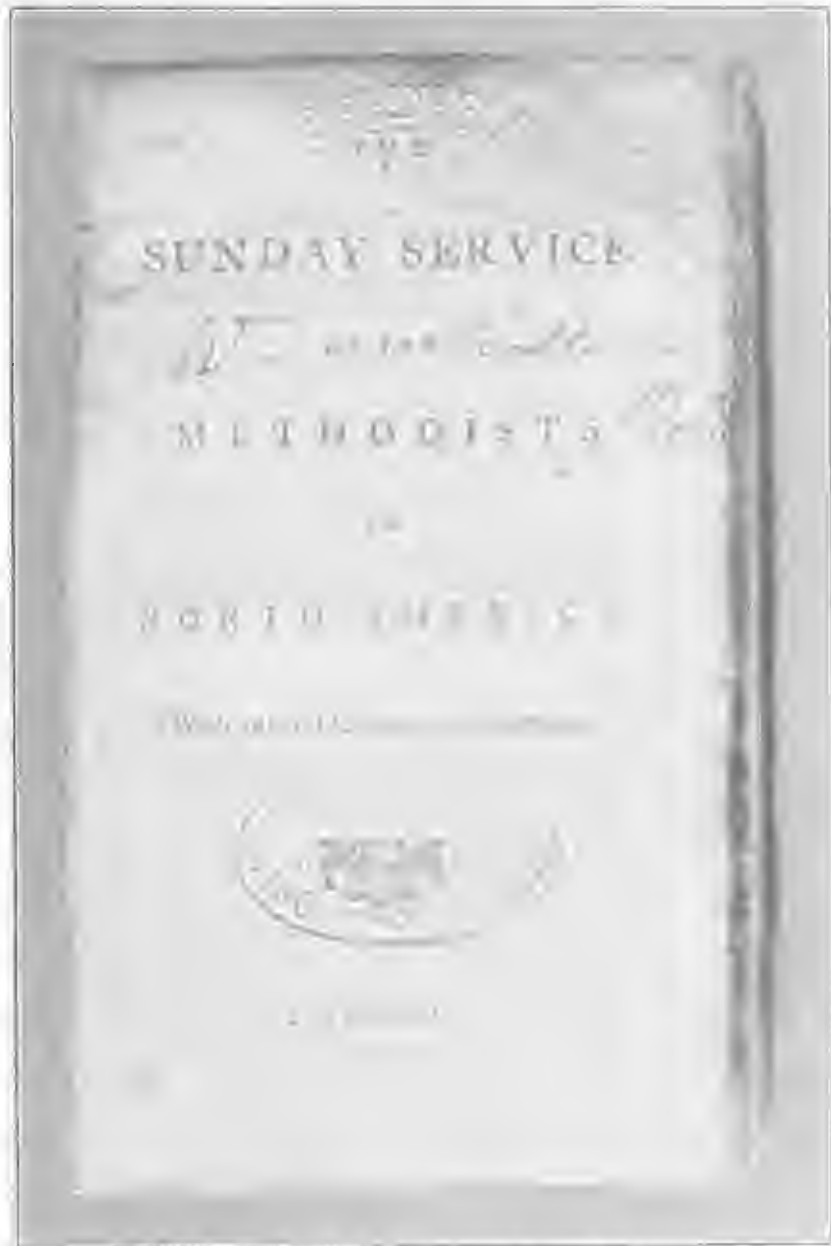
The Articles of Religion which Wesley offered and the Conference approved were twenty-four in number, being extracted from the famous "Thirty-nine Articles" of Anglican Protestantism. The omitted articles are III, VIII, XIII, XV, XVII, XVIII, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, and parts of VI, IX, and XIX. Stevens asserts that the selection contains the essence of theological orthodoxy, with the possible exception of Article XVII, "On Predestination and Election," sometimes called "The Calvinistic Article." "On the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Atonement, the Sacred Canon, Original Sin, Free-will, Justification, and Good Works, he (Wesley) retains the essence and very nearly the exact language of the Anglican symbol."

The sections which Wesley rejected include "The Going Down of Christ into Hell" (III), the recommendation of the "Apocryphal Scriptures" (VI), the eighth article, which recognizes the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles' Creeds, "The Authority of the Church" (XX), and "The Authority of General Councils." It is noticeable that most of these were remnants of Roman Catholic traditions or opinions surviving in the creed of the reformers. It is noteworthy that the Methodist Articles of Religion include none of the distinctively Wesleyan doctrines—the so-called "Arminianism," "Witness of the Spirit," and "Christian Perfection."

So much for doctrine. As to clerical offices and orders, the Discipline placed the superintendents, soon to be called bishops, at the head. Then follow the "assistants," who are

elders and deacons. After them are the "helpers," or unordained preachers. The duties of the superintendent were: to ordain superintendents, elders, and deacons; to preside in the Conferences; to fix the appointments of the preachers; and between Conferences to change, receive, or suspend preachers, on occasion, and to receive and decide appeals. While the Conference elected men to orders, he had the veto power. The superintendent was to be chosen by a majority of the Conference and the consent and laying on of hands of another superintendent. In case there

were no superintendent, the elders, or any three of them, should ordain the candidate selected by the Conference. The Conference reserved the power to try the superintendent and depose him for cause. He had no diocese,



PHOTOGRAPHED FROM THE ORIGINAL IN THE LIBRARY OF DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THE METHODIST PRAYER BOOK.

This copy belonged to William Watters, "the First American Native Itinerant."

and no episcopal revenue except the preachers' uniform stipend of \$64.

In charge of the preachers of each district was a superintendent's assistant, one of the newly ordained elders. The unordained men under him were his "helpers." His duties, exactly set down in the first description, were multifarious: "to see that the other preachers in his circuit behave well and want nothing; to renew the tickets quarterly and regulate the bands; to take in or put out of the society or the bands; to appoint all the stewards and leaders, and change them when he sees it necessary; to keep watch nights and love feasts; to hold quarterly meetings, and therein diligently to inquire both into the temporal and spiritual state of each society; to take care that every society be duly supplied with books, particularly with à Kempis, Instructions for Children, and the Primitive Physic, which ought to be in every house; to take exact lists of his societies, and bring them to the Conference; to send an account of his circuit every half year to one of the superintendents; to meet the married men and women, and the single men and women in the large societies once a quarter; to overlook the accounts of all the stewards; to take a regular catalogue of his societies as they live in house-row; to leave his successor a particular account of the state of the circuit; vigorously but calmly to enforce the rules concerning needless ornaments and drams; as soon as there are four men or women believers in any place to put them into a band; to suffer no love feast to last above an hour and a half; everywhere to recommend decency and cleanliness; and to read the Rules of the Society, with the aid of his helpers, once a year in every congregation, and once a quarter in every society "

The special function of the elder was to administer the

sacraments and to perform all the other rites prescribed by the liturgy. It was not until later that the elders were placed over several circuits, and intrusted with the administrative work of the presiding eldership. At the first Conference about one fourth of the preachers were elected to orders. In time it became customary for all members of Conference to be ordained successively deacons and elders. When this came in the old distinction of "assistant" and "helper" disappeared, and the terms went out of use.

The ordained deacon was "to baptize in the absence of an elder, to assist the elder in the administration of the Lord's Supper, to marry, bury the dead, and read the liturgy to the people, as prescribed, except what relates to the administration of the Lord's Supper."

The helpers were all preachers other than the superintendents and their assistants. The first Discipline enumerates their duties: "1. To preach. 2. To meet the society and the bands weekly. 3. To visit the sick. 4. To meet the leaders weekly;" and adds: "Let every preacher be particularly exact in this and in morning preaching. If he has twenty hearers, let him preach. We are fully determined never to drop morning preaching, and to preach at 5 A. M. wherever it is practicable." The line between the ordained men and the ordinary preachers was strictly drawn, and on no account were the helpers to officiate at the Communion service or to read the morning and evening service in the congregation except by the written authorization of the bishop.

No person was to be employed as traveling preacher unless his name was printed in the Minutes or a certificate given by the superintendent or circuit "assistant." The Minutes, some of which had hitherto remained in manuscript, were now to be published annually.

In 1794 John Dickins issued the Minutes of all the American Conferences, up to and including that year, in a neat volume.

M I N U T E S

OF THE

Methodist Conferences,

ANNUALLY HELD IN

A M E R I C A,

From 1773 to 1794, inclusive.



PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY HENRY TUCKNISS, NO. 25, CHURCH-ALLEY,
AND SOLD BY JOHN DICKINS, NO. 44, NORTH SECOND
STREET, NEAR ARCH STREET.

M DC C XCV.

FROM THE ORIGINAL OWNED BY JAMES R. JOY.

TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST COLLECTED EDITION OF
THE GENERAL MINUTES.

The arrangement for the support of the preachers was primitive in the extreme. The Conference fixed upon \$64 per annum as the uniform salary of the traveling preachers, with an equal allowance for the preacher's wife, \$16 for each child under six years of age, and about \$22 each for those between six and eleven. The allowances for children were repealed two years later. The ministers of the new Church forbade themselves taking

any fee or present for services at baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Some years later wedding fees were authorized,

but the receipts must be reported to the steward and credited to the preacher's salary; furthermore, if that sum were already made up, the fee or "present" must be taken to Conference and given to the preachers whose salaries were in arrears. It was sixteen years before the preacher was allowed to own the fees that accrued to him.

A Preachers' Fund was instituted for the benefit of superannuates and widows and orphans of preachers. Members paid into it \$2.67 on their admission to Conference and \$2 annual dues. "Every worn-out preacher," say the rules, "shall receive, if he wants it, \$64 a year; every widow, if she wants it, \$53.33; every child shall receive once for all, if he wants it, \$53.33." We are told that even this pittance relieved the distress of many, and the fund was generally subscribed. The Preachers' Fund was merged in the Chartered Fund in 1797, and ultimately the plan of annual subscriptions was dropped.

Collections were authorized in "every principal congregation" for a "general fund for carrying on the whole work of God." This was for the support of preachers in pioneering new fields.

Communicants were recommended to receive the Eucharist kneeling, though other postures were permitted. Only members of the Church and persons with tickets from the preacher might come to the Lord's table. An option of sprinkling or immersion was afforded to candidates for baptism, and rebaptism was allowed to those adults who doubted the efficacy of their baptism in infancy. Persistent neglect of class meetings must be punished by exclusion from the Church. The same penalty was enacted for members marrying "unawakened persons." This was modified in 1804 to "putting back on trial for six months," and later was removed altogether.

Slavery was already beginning to be a disturbing factor in American Methodism. It had several times been the subject of discussion by the preachers. That the Christmas Conference should make a declaration on the subject is not to be wondered at: "We view it as contrary to the golden law of God, on which hang all the law and the prophets, and the inalienable rights of mankind, as well as every principle of the Revolution, to hold in the deepest debasement, in a more abject slavery than is perhaps to be found in any part of the world except America, so many souls that are all capable of the image of God. We therefore think it our most bounden duty to take immediately some effectual method to extirpate this abomination from among us."

During the entire session of the Christmas Conference the utmost regard was paid to the wishes of Wesley. While all possible method and order were employed in organizing a new Church, there was a full recognition of the spiritual authority of the just founder. One of the declarations of the body was that "during the life of Rev. Mr. Wesley we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the Gospel, ready in matters belonging to Church government to obey his commands. And we do engage after his death to do everything that we judge consistent with the cause of religion in America, and the political interests of these States, to preserve and promote our union with the Methodists of Europe."

The historical Christmas Conference was the first General Conference, not a delegated body, but the whole ministry in session. It made no provision for a successor, and for some years all legislation was accomplished by the superintendent presenting each new measure to the several Annual Conferences, a majority of all being required to enact. There was a General Conference in 1792, of which no Minutes were

published. The third was in 1796, and since that year the sessions have been quadrennial. The General Conference of 1808 prescribed a new method of constituting the body, and in 1812 the first delegated General Conference met in New York city

The Annual Conferences during the earlier years were considered “local or sectional meetings of the one undivided ministry, held in different localities, for the local convenience of its members.” For a few years preceding 1784 two Conferences were held each year; three were appointed for 1785, six for 1788, eleven for 1789, and in 1790 there were, besides the Eastern Conferences, two beyond the Alleghanies. The General Conference was at this time a collective assembly of the Annual Conferences.

The Annual Conference sessions were largely attended, interested laymen coming from long distances to look on. They were deeply religious gatherings, with frequent sermons and prayers in the intervals of business. The business was conducted in the familiar Wesleyan fashion of questions and answers. There were no presiding elders, and the bishop appointed the preachers without the advice of a cabinet.

Once in three months the traveling preachers, local preachers, exhorters, leaders, stewards, and, later, the trustees and Sunday school superintendents of the circuit met in Quarterly Conference to consider the interests of the circuit. Its temporal business was of less magnitude than the spiritual, for these were occasions for multitudinous gatherings of Methodist folk, singly and by families, for the two days of prayer, song, and exhortation. The humble chapels could not contain these throngs, and often the sermons were preached out of doors.



CHAPTER XXXIII

The Regimen of the Preachers

TWELVE RULES FOR A HELPER.—TESTING THE CANDIDATE.—PREACHING REQUIRED BY THE TIMES.—PASTORAL VISITING.—HINTS ON HOMILETICS.—THE CLASS MEETING.

TO no part of the Methodist system, either as originally prepared in England by Wesley or as modified in the United States, was greater attention given than to the quality and regimen of the preachers. The view seems to have been that equal care must be taken with the clergy whether the candidate came from another Church or began his ministry among the Methodists themselves. The "Rules of a Helper," prescribed in the first Discipline, were practically those which Wesley had drawn up for the guidance of the English preachers:

1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
2. Be serious. Let your motto be "Holiness to the Lord." Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.
3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, particularly young women.
4. Take no step toward marriage without first consulting with your brethren.
5. Believe evil of no one; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the

prisoner's side. 6. Speak evil of no one, else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your breast till you come to the person concerned. 7. Tell everyone who is under your care what you think wrong in his conduct and tempers, and that plainly, as soon as may be; else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom. 8. Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing master. A preacher of the Gospel is the servant of all. 9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; not of fetching wood (if time permit) or drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbor's. 10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake. 11. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most. Observe: it is not your business to preach so many times, or to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord. And remember! A Methodist preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist Discipline. Therefore you will need all the sense you have, and to have all your wits about you. 12. Act in all things not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct; partly in preaching and visiting from house to house; partly in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labor with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful that you should do that part of the work which we advise at those times and places which we judge most for his glory.

These twelve rules, with the exception of insignificant verbal changes, are the same as the original rules for the observance of the English Wesleyans. In a short time they underwent slight modifications in the American Discipline. In the edition of 1786 the "dancing master" took his departure from rule 8, and the "cleaning shoes" from rule 9. In 1789 the same rule lost its recommendations touching the "fetching wood" and "drawing water." The American practice also ameliorated Wesley's requirement concerning early morning preaching. In winter the service might be at 6 A. M. instead of 5, and in 1789 the preacher is "to preach in the morning where he can get hearers." In 1804 the requirement softens to a "recommendation."

The 68th question was: "How shall we try those who

think they are moved by the Holy Ghost to preach?" and the answer was Wesley's:

Inquire, 1. Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation. 2. Have they gifts (as well as grace) for the work? Have they (in some tolerable degree) a clear, sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? 3. Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin and converted to God by their preaching? As long as these three marks concur in anyone we believe he is called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient proof that he is "moved thereto by the Holy Ghost."

In receiving a new helper the Conference was to ask the following prescribed questions, after fasting and prayer:

Have you faith in Christ? Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to be perfected in love in this life? Are you groaning after it? Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and to his work? Do you know the Methodist Plan? Do you know the Rules of the Society? Of the Bands? Do you keep them? Do you take no Drums? Do you constantly attend the Sacrament? Have you read the Minutes of the Conference? Are you willing to conform to them? Have you considered the Rules of a Helper; especially the first, tenth, twelfth? Will you keep them for conscience' sake? Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God? Will you preach every morning at five o'clock wherever you can have twenty hearers? Will you endeavor not to speak too long or too loud? Will you diligently instruct the children in every place? Will you visit from house to house? Will you recommend fasting both by precept and example?

On assenting to these questions the candidate was to be taken on trial for two years, and after this probation he might, on recommendation of the assistant and further examination by the Conference, be received into full connection.

Our first Discipline has many other specific admonitions for the preachers, mostly copied from the English Minutes. "We are raised up," they said, "to reform the continent and to spread scriptural holiness over these lands." In pursuance of their call "to save that which is lost," the preachers are to go out in God's name into the most public places and

call all to repent and believe the Gospel. “But what avails public preaching alone,” they continue, “though we could preach like angels? We must, yea, every traveling preacher must, instruct them from house to house.” And, “Let every preacher, having a catalogue of those in each society, go to each house and deal gently with them, that the report of it may move others to desire your coming. Do this in earnest, and you will soon find what a work you take in hand in undertaking to be a traveling preacher ”

To remedy the prevalent ills of “Sabbath breaking, evil speaking, unprofitable conversation, lightness, expensiveness or gayety of apparel, and contracting debts without due care to discharge them,” the following suggestions were made:

1. Let us preach expressly on each of these heads.
2. Read in every society the Sermon on Evil Speaking.
3. Let the leaders closely examine and exhort every person to put away the accursed thing.
4. Let the preacher warn every society that none who is guilty herein can remain with us.
5. Extirpate smuggling, buying, or selling uncustomed goods, out of every society. Let none remain with us who will not totally abstain from every kind and degree of it.
6. Extirpate bribery, receiving anything, directly or indirectly, for voting in any election. Show no respect of persons herein, but expel all that touch the accursed thing.

To employ their time the preachers were advised:

1. As often as possible to rise at four.
2. From four to five in the morning, and from five to six in the evening, to meditate, pray, and read, partly the Scriptures with Mr. Wesley's Notes, partly the closely practical parts of what he has published.
3. From six in the morning till twelve (allowing an hour for breakfast) to read in order, with much prayer, the Christian Library and other pious books.

To Question 50, “Why is it that the people under our care are no better?” It was answered, “The chief is, because we are not more knowing and more holy ”

The answer to Question 51, “But why are we not more knowing?” is voluminous:

Because we are idle. Which of you spends as many hours a day in God's work as you did formerly in man's work? We talk, or read history or

what comes next to hand. We must, absolutely must, cure this evil, or betray the cause of God.

But how? 1. Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employ, or, at least, five hours in four-and-twenty.

"But I have no taste for reading." Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your trade.

"But I have no books." We desire the assistants will take care that all the large societies provide Mr. Wesley's works for the use of the preachers.

2. In the afternoon follow Mr. Baxter's plan. Then you will have no time to spare: you will have work enough for all your time. Then, likewise, no preacher will stay with us who is as salt that has lost its savor. For to such this employment would be mere drudgery. And in order to it you will have need of all the knowledge you can procure.

The sum is, Go into every house in course, and teach everyone therein, young and old, if they belong to us, to be Christians inwardly and outwardly. Make every particular plain to their understanding; fix it in their memory; write it on their heart. In order to this, there must be "line upon line, precept upon precept." What patience, what love, what knowledge is requisite for this!

We must needs do this, were it only to avoid idleness. Do we not loiter away many hours in every week? Each try himself: no idleness is consistent with growth in grace. Nay, without exactness in redeeming time, you cannot retain the grace you have received in justification.

But what shall we do for the rising generation? Who will labor for them? Let him who is zealous for God and the souls of men begin now.

1. Where there are ten children whose parents are in society, meet them at least an hour every week.

2. Talk with them every time you see any at home.

3. Pray in earnest for them.

4. Diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses.

5. Preach expressly on education. "But I have no gift for this." Gift or no gift, you are to do it; else you are not called to be a Methodist preacher. Do it as you can, till you can do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the gift, and use the means for it.

"Question 52. Why are not we more holy? Why do not we live in eternity; walk with God all the day long? Why are we not all devoted to God; breathing the whole spirit of missionaries?"

Answer: Chiefly because we are enthusiasts; looking for the end without using the means. To touch only upon two or three instances: Who of you rises at four, or even at five, when he does not preach? Do you recommend to

all our societies the five o'clock hour for private prayer? Do you observe it, or any other fixed time? Do you not find by experience that any time is no time? Do you know the obligation and the benefits of fasting? How often do you practice it? The neglect of this alone is sufficient to account for our feebleness and faintness of spirit. We are continually grieving the Holy Spirit of God by the habitual neglect of a plain duty! Let us amend from this hour.

Following some plain advice about diet and health came Question 54, "What is the best general method of preaching?"

"Answer: 1. To convince. 2. To offer Christ. 3. To build up; and to do this in some measure in every sermon."

The answer to one question, 55, enumerated additional "smaller advices" in homiletics:

1. Be sure never to disappoint a congregation, unless in case of life or death.
2. Begin precisely at the time appointed.
3. Let your whole deportment before the congregation be serious, weighty, and solemn.
4. Always suit your subjects to your audience.
5. Choose the plainest texts you can.
6. Take care not to ramble; but keep to your text, and make out what you take in hand.
7. Take care of anything awkward or affected, either in your gesture, phrase, or pronunciation.
8. Sing no hymns of your own composing.
9. Print nothing without the approbation of one or other of the superintendents.
10. Do not usually pray extempore above eight or ten minutes (at most) without intermission.
11. Frequently read and enlarge upon a portion of the Notes; and let young preachers often exhort without taking a text.
12. Always kneel during public prayer.
13. Everywhere avail yourself of the great festivals by preaching on the occasion.
14. Beware of clownishness. Be courteous to all.
15. Be merciful to your beast. Not only ride moderately, but see with your own eyes that your horse be rubbed and fed.

The preachers were admonished to "strongly and closely insist upon inward and outward holiness." A special set of rules was laid down "to guard against formality in singing." The "instituted and prudential means of grace" were fully explained and earnestly recommended, and the preachers were exhorted to private prayer, serious conversation, study of the New Testament Scriptures, and strict self-denial.

Each local Methodist society of members and probationers was divided into classes of twelve or more each, which met weekly for religious culture, under proper leaders who were

directly amenable to the preacher. Wherever the society owned a chapel or other property the title was vested in a board of trustees. The stewards administered the other finances. In most societies would be one or more earnest laymen who, as licensed exhorters or local preachers, were nursing their talents for the regular work of the itinerancy. The societies in greater or less numbers were grouped in circuits, over which were the “assistant”—an ordained elder competent to administer the sacrament—and two or three unordained traveling preachers or “helpers.” The local preachers were useful in serving preaching stations, and the class leaders were the faithful subpastors of the flock in the absence of a settled pastorate. The presiding elder’s district, a group of neighboring circuits under special supervision, was not yet introduced.



CHAPTER XXXIV

A Continental Diocese

THE FIELD.—TRAVELING IN 1790.—ASBURY IN THE CAROLINAS.—THE FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.—IN COKE'S ABSENCE.—OVER THE VIRGINIA MOUNTAINS.

THE two Methodist bishops took the continent for their diocese. From, and including, the British provinces on the north to the Spanish possessions on the south, and through the gateways of the mountains to the English settlements upon the western waters, their authority extended wherever the Methodist preachers might penetrate. Over this vast and rapidly widening territory they passed continually in their tours of inspection, attending the Annual Conferences, stationing the preachers, collecting funds for the college, preaching at quarterly meetings, and planning for the development of the work. The brunt of the business fell upon Asbury, for Coke, engaged with the affairs of the British Conference and with his own project of world-wide missions, though he visited this country five times within eight years, spent in the aggregate but eighteen months of this period within the boundaries of the Church over whose organization he had presided.

To travel this enormous circuit was a task from which a

sturdier man than Asbury might have shrunk. Three hundred miles then was farther than three thousand miles now. "It was no uncommon thing," says MacMaster, "for one who went on business or on pleasure from Charleston to Boston or New York, if he were a prudent or cautious man, to consult the almanac before setting out, to make his will, to give a dinner to his friends at the tavern, and there bid them a formal good-bye."

The large rivers were all unbridged, and the best ferryboats were but rude scows, almost unmanageable in rough weather. The highways were poorly graded and ill kept, even in the older sections, while the new settlements could be reached only by rude trails over rugged mountains and through forests infested by wild beasts and savage men. How severe were the conditions of travel even along the Atlantic seaboard routes may be learned by the perusal of Joseph Pilmoor's Journal.

At the beginning of 1785, when Asbury set out upon his first episcopal round of the Conferences, there were 18,000 Methodists in society, representing a constituency of some 200,000. Besides the 104 traveling preachers there were several times that number of local preachers and exhorters actively employed. Lednum, the antiquarian, enumerates over sixty chapels which had been built previous to this time, including one in New York, four in New Jersey, five in Pennsylvania, nine in Delaware, a score in Maryland, with nearly as many in Virginia, and nine in North Carolina.

On the evening of the adjournment of the Christmas Conference, January 3, 1785, Francis Asbury, now superintendent of the Methodist Episcopal Church, preached, in Baltimore, his first sermon since his ordination and consecration. His text was from Eph. iii, 8, "Unto me, who am less than



SKETCHED BY G. W. BOATE FROM THE ITINERARY IN ASBURY'S JOURNAL.

BISHOP ASBURY'S FIRST EPISCOPAL TOUR, 1785.

Leaving Baltimore at the close of the Christmas Conference, he reached Fairfax, Va., January 4, 1785; crossed the State and reached North Carolina January 20; was at Salisbury, N. C., February 10; Charleston, S. C., February 24; Wilmington, N. C., March 19; Green Hill's (Conference), April 19; Yorktown, Va., May 12; Annapolis, May 14; Mount Vernon, May 26; Baltimore, June 1 (Conference).

the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." The next day he rode forty miles, to Fairfax, Va., and thence pressed southward for weeks at a pace which broke down his horse. He found the Virginians ripe for the changes which the General Conference had decreed, and they welcomed the news that henceforth the Methodist elders were qualified to



DRAWN BY J. OLIVER NUGENT.

AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH.

COMMUNION TABLE FROM OLD REHOBOTH CHURCH, UNION, VA.

administer the sacraments. He wore the cassock and bands of an Anglican clergyman and used the prayer book as revised by Wesley; usages which especially endeared him to those who had belonged to the Established Church, but which grieved men like Jesse Lee, as "an innovation upon that plainness and simplicity which had always been characteristic of the Methodists of America."

In company with Lee and another young preacher, Henry Willis, Asbury pushed on to Charleston, S. C., where they found the inhabitants "vain and wicked to a proverb." Their congregations here were large, but inclined to turbulence, for even the ministers had warned the people against the newcomers. Yet some persons, including their kind host, Mr. Wells, were left under gracious impressions. After two weeks' sojourn, during which he had preached almost daily, Asbury departed for North Carolina, leaving Willis to found the church in Charleston. "I have been out for six

weeks," he writes, "and ridden near five hundred miles among strangers to me, to God, and to the power of religion." He had experienced a great variety of treatment. In some places the best citizens had been proud to greet him, at others Methodist laymen had taken him to their hearts and homes; in other places doors were closed in his face. In a tavern at Wilmington, N. C., the bishop writes: "We had merry, singing, drunken raftsmen. To their merriment I soon put a stop. I felt the power of the devil here." A month later, April 20, 1785, at Green Hill's, near Louisburg, N. C., the first session of an Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was held, both Coke and Asbury being present. About twenty preachers attended, from Virginia and the Carolinas, and Coke notes that "by laying beds on the floors there was room for all in one house." It was this Conference that allotted to Beverly Allen "all Georgia to range in," the first Methodist appointment in that great State.

The bishops usually traveled together, and presided jointly at the Conferences during the visits of Coke to this country



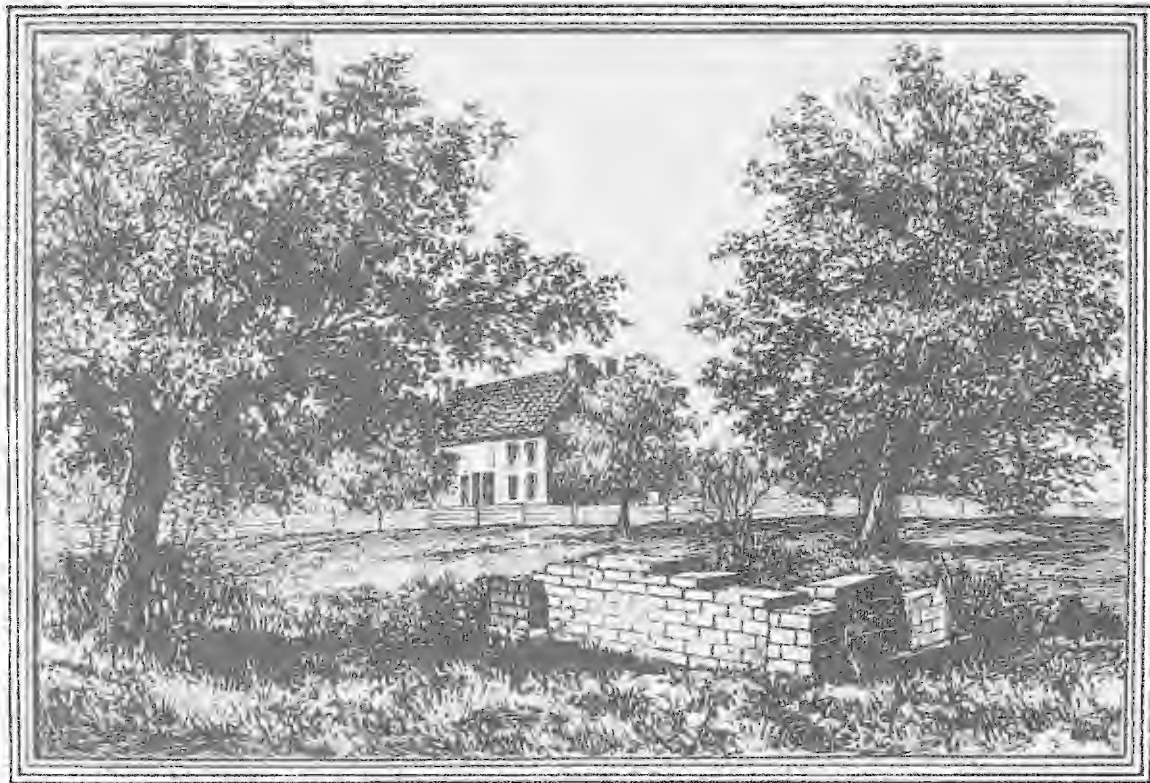
DRAWN BY T. C. RUCKLE FROM AN ORIGINAL PORTRAIT.

REV. HENRY WILLIS.

Reproduced from the lithograph in Roberts's Centenary Pictorial Album.

On their trip through Virginia they dined with General Washington at Mount Vernon, before going to Baltimore, where Coke said farewell to the preachers in Conference, and sailed for home in June, 1785.

For nearly two years—June, 1785, to March, 1787—the entire supervision of the work rested on Asbury. He was constantly in motion, passing from New York to Charleston, with in-



DRAWN BY J. P. DAVIS.

FROM A LITHOGRAPH.

DWELLING AND TOMB OF HENRY WILLIS.

The Baltimore Conference met in this house in 1801.

finite disregard of toil and fatigue. His Journals give the most modest records of his discomforts and mishaps. It is only at signs of religious prosperity that the words kindle. He sleeps in tavern lofts, listening to the wind tugging at the shingles; his books are wet in fording streams; the wretched roads drive him from his carriage to the saddle, and the deep rivers endanger the lives of horse and rider. These are a few of the incidents of one month's travels; his

health is delicate, the important thing is that his "soul has peace." In September, 1785, the bishop was in New York, reading prayers from the Sunday Service in John Street. By the new year, 1786, he was at the far end of his parish, among the pioneer circuits of South Carolina. With his body heavy and afflicted with pain he rode twenty miles a day for many days. After the North Carolina Conference session in February he retraced his steps northward, holding the Conferences in Virginia and Baltimore, and reaching New York the last of August, spent with fatigue. With him came Harry Hosier, his colored servant, whose preaching attracted more attention in the newspapers than that of the bishop himself. Indeed the New York Packet's notice of "this very singular black man" is said to be the earliest mention of New York Methodism in the city press.



AFTER T. C. RUCKLE'S DRAWING FROM AN ORIGINAL PORTRAIT.

MRS. ANN HOLLINGSWORTH WILLIS.

Reproduced from Roberts's Centenary Pictorial Album.

In the following March, 1787, Coke having arrived in Charleston, S. C., the two bishops held Conference there, and thence made a forced march of three hundred miles between Sabbaths into North Carolina, attending two quarterly

meetings on the way. "O may the Lord seal and water his own word," was Asbury's prayer, "that all this toil of man and beast be not in vain." Signs were multiplying that it was not in vain; for at one quarterly meeting they "met



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE HOUSE OF REV. GREEN HILL.

Here was held, April 20, 1785, the first Annual Conference session of the newly organized Methodist Episcopal Church in America. At this Conference were present four distinguished pioneers of Methodism, Bishops Coke and Asbury, and Revs. John King and Green Hill. The two last named were brothers-in-law, and the old house has been in the possession of their kindred almost continuously for more than a hundred years.

with a multitude of people who were desperately wicked—but God hath wrought among them!"

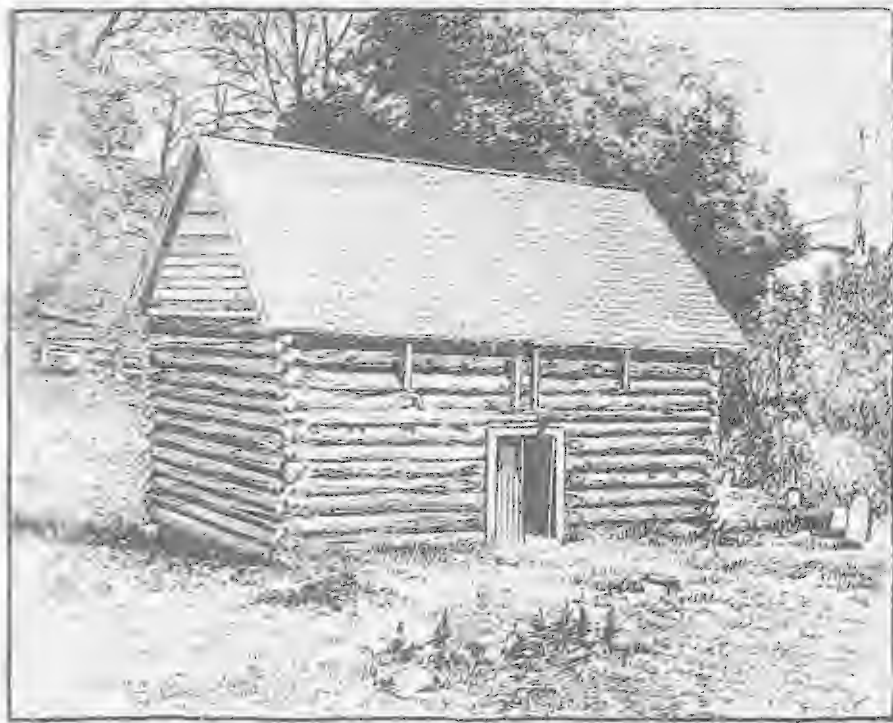
After the Conferences in Virginia and Baltimore, the latter the scene of the struggle in which the preachers successfully asserted their authority against Coke and Wesley, the bishops visited New York, where Asbury remained for several weeks, making excursions into Long Island, preaching in the almshouse, visiting the families of the members, or the sick, and making himself generally useful.

From May, 1787, until February, 1789, Asbury was again alone, and in 1788 his travels took a wider range. In March of the latter year his round of episcopal visitation began at Charleston with the second South Carolina Conference, where he had "a very free and open time," notwithstanding that on one occasion a riotous fellow set the congregation in a panic, and again a stone was hurled through the window, narrowly missing the preacher. The next stage took the bishop into Georgia, "where I much wanted to be," he says. Ten devoted preachers were present at the first Conference session of this State, held in Wilkes (now Elbert) County, April 9-11, 1788. At its close he turned his horse's head in a new direction.

"Holstein" Conference had been appointed for Tuesday, May 13. It was held at Keywoods, near Saltville, among the mountains of southwestern Virginia, and to reach that point from Georgia the bishop must traverse the upper part of South Carolina, the roughest section of North Carolina, and the forest fastnesses of eastern Tennessee. At the end of ten days, "both saddles being broken, both horses foundered, and both their backs sore," a brief halt was necessary. The unusual difficulties of the next stage are graphically depicted in the bishop's Journal:

"April 28. After getting our horses shod, we made a move for Holstein [Holston], and entered upon the mountains; the first of which I called steel, the second stone, and the third iron mountain. They are rough, and difficult to climb. We were spoken to on our way by most awful thunder and lightning, accompanied by heavy rain. We crept for shelter into a little dirty house, where the filth might have been taken from the floor with a spade. We felt the want of a fire, but could get little wood to make it, and what we gath-

ered was wet. At the head of Watauga we fed, and reached Ward's that night. Coming to the river next day, we hired a young man to swim over for the canoe, in which we crossed, while our horses swam to the other shore. The waters being up, we were compelled to travel an old road over the moun-



DRAWN BY F. E. FLINTOFF.

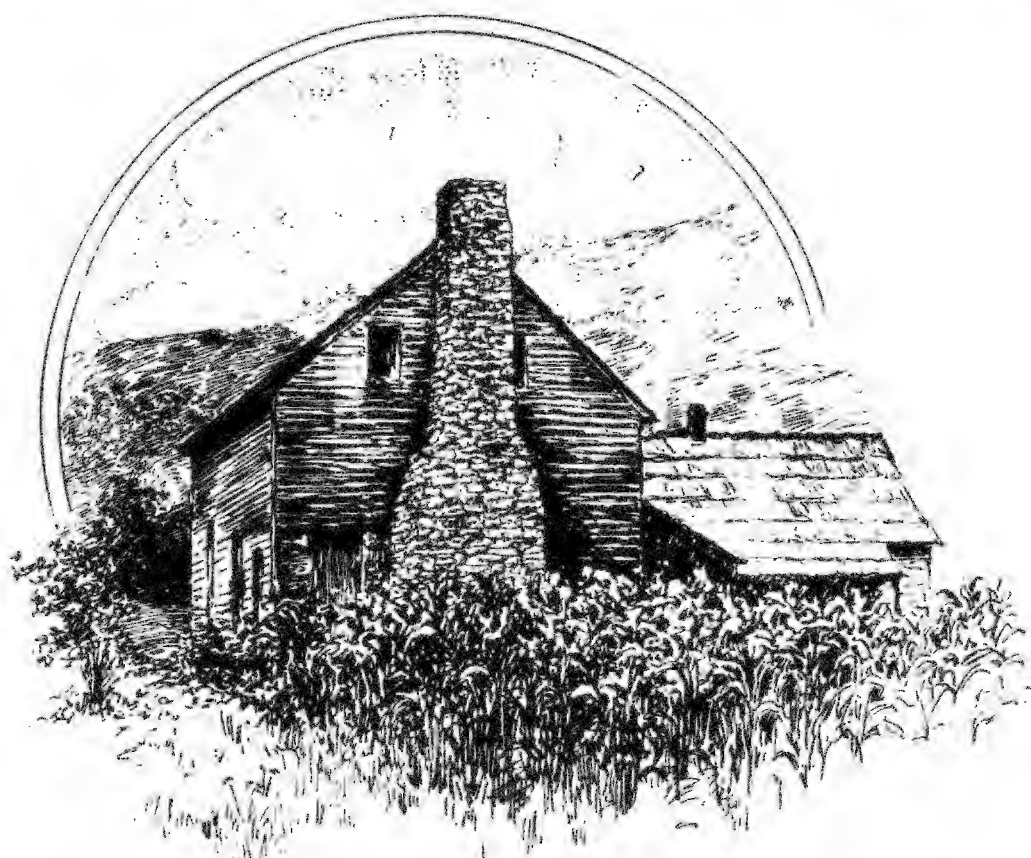
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

OLD REHOBOTH CHURCH, NEAR UNION, MONROE
COUNTY, VA. BUILT 1786.

Bishop Asbury opened this chapel, and held Conference in it 1792, 1793, 1796. Asbury, Garrettson, Lee, Poythress, McKendree, O'Kelly, and Beverley Waugh preached here.

tains. Night came on; I was ready to faint with a violent headache. The mountain was steep on both sides. I prayed to the Lord for help. Presently a profuse sweat broke out upon me and my fever entirely subsided. About nine o'clock we came to Grear's. After taking a little rest here, we set out next morning for Brother Coxe's, on Holstein River. I had trouble enough. Our route lay through the woods, and my pack horse would neither follow, lead, nor drive, so fond was he of stopping to feed on the green herbage. I

tried the lead, and he pulled back. I tied his head up to prevent his grazing, and he ran back. The weather was excessively warm. I was much fatigued and my temper not a little tried. I fed at I. Smith's and prayed with the family. Arriving at the river, I was at a loss what to do, but providentially a man came along who conducted me across. This has been an awful journey to me, and this a tiresome day,



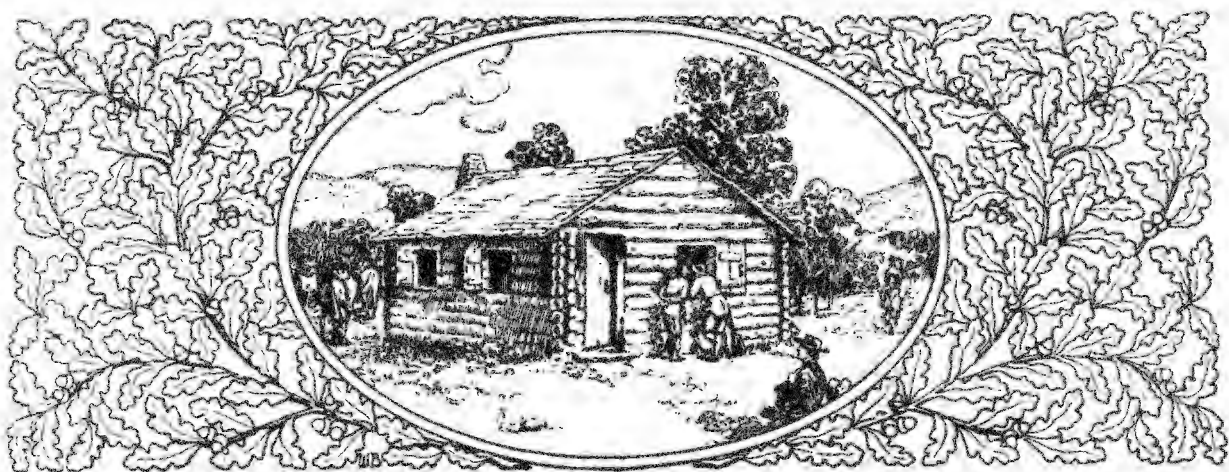
DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS.

THE HOME OF GENERAL WILLIAM RUSSELL, SALTVILLE, VA.

Where Asbury was entertained, 1788, and often in later years.

and now, after riding seventy-five miles, I have thirty-five miles more to General Russell's. I rest one day to revive man and beast."

Such was the journey of the first American bishop who crossed the mountains to hold Conference in the basin of the Mississippi.



CHAPTER XXXV

Want and Travail of Asbury

HOLSTON CONFERENCE.—UNIONTOWN.—FIRST METHODIST CONFERENCE
SESSION IN NEW YORK.—ADDRESS TO PRESIDENT WASHINGTON.—
WASHINGTON'S MEMORABLE REPLY.

ELDER JOHN TUNNELL and his handful of ultramontane pioneers met the travel-worn bishop in a cheerless cabin. The room was so cold that even these hardy frontiersmen could hardly keep their seats; but surely it must have warmed their hearts to listen to his daily sermons, and to see in his presence among them impressive evidence that the connectional tie of Methodism was not to be broken by mountain or wilderness. The itinerants returned to their work among the little settlements of Tennessee and Kentucky, refreshed by contact with the brethren from the East and with renewed confidence in the power of the new cause to surmount all obstacles.

For the Russells, with whom Asbury found a home during this Conference, the event marked an epoch. They were a pioneer family of the sturdiest Virginia type. General William Russell, a sterling patriot, had migrated to this valley less than a year earlier. His wife was Elizabeth, a sister of the orator, Patrick Henry, and herself a woman of

great strength of mind and will. Both General and Mrs. Russell were converted during this Conference session, and their home became a harbor of refuge for the homeless itinerants. Asbury's note of his entertainment there five years later was: "I was nursed as an only child by the good man and woman of the house, and, indeed, by all the family—God Almighty bless them and reward them." For years after her husband's death "Madam Russell" was a pillar of Methodism in southwestern Virginia. She was a family connection of President Madison, who used to say that no prayers touched him like hers. The Virginia Methodists honored her by linking her memory with that of a distinguished bishop in the name of their college, Emory and Henry, at Abingdon, where her latter days were spent.

Asbury's circuitous route next took him eastward, to Petersburg, where he met the Virginia preachers, and then northwestward, crossing the mountains of western Virginia a second time, to hold Conference at Uniontown, in the southwestern angle of Pennsylvania. This midsummer passage was scarcely less distressful than that of the early spring. The bishop writes: "The mud and mire was such as might scarcely be expected in December. We came to an old forsaken habitation in Tygert's Valley—Here our horses grazed about while we boiled our meat. Midnight brought us up at



FROM THE LIKENESS IN THE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH BY T. L. PRESTON.

MRS. ELIZABETH RUSSELL.

This sister of Patrick Henry was converted during Asbury's stay at the house of her husband, General Russell.

Jones's, after riding forty or perhaps fifty miles. The old man, our host, was kind enough to wake us up at four o'clock in the morning. We journeyed on through devious lonely wilds, where no food might be found except what grew in the woods or was carried with us. We met with two women who were going to see their friends and to attend the quarterly meeting at Clarksburg. Near midnight we stopped at A——'s, who hissed his dogs at us; but the women were determined to get to quarterly meeting; so we went in. Our supper was tea. Brothers Phœbus and Cook took to the woods; old —— gave up his bed to the women. I lay along the floor on a few deerskins, with the fleas. That night our poor horses got no corn, and the next morning they had to swim across the Monongahela. After a twenty-mile ride we came to Clarksburg, and man and beast were so outdone that it took us ten hours to accomplish it." Here he was entertained by "Colonel Jackson," preached "with freedom" to seven hundred people, and then took up his fatiguing journey, rising betimes, and riding far into the night. "O," he exclaims, as he approaches the older settlements, "how glad I should be of a plain, clean plank to lie on, as preferable to most of the beds! The gnats are almost as troublesome here as the mosquitoes in the lowlands. This country will require much work to make it tolerable. The people are, many of them, of the boldest cast of adventurers, and with some the decencies of civilized society are scarcely regarded. On the one hand savage warfare teaches them to be cruel; and on the other the preaching of antinomians poisons them with error in doctrine. Good moralists they are not, and good Christians they cannot be unless they are better taught."

From July 22 to 25, 1788, Asbury held Conference at

Uniontown. Whatcoat, afterward bishop, was one of the twelve, preachers and probationers, in attendance. A youth who was present long remembered the solemnity of the occasion when the bishop and Whatcoat, in gowns and bands, ordained Michael Leard. This was the first Methodist ordination west of the mountains. It "looked well in the eyes of the Church people," says our eyewitness; "for not only did the preachers appear in sacerdotal robes, but the morning service [of the Church of England] was read, as abridged by Mr. Wesley "

In August the overworked superintendent spent a few days at Bath, Va., for his health, occupying himself



DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS.

FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
UNIONTOWN, PA.

closely with various studies and in reading, writing, and prayer. In September he was ready for the important Conference at Baltimore, which was followed by one in Philadelphia, the first to be held there since the organization of the Church in 1784.

This year of innovations was not to close without another novelty. From September 30 to October 4 the first session of the New York Conference was held in the John Street Church, Asbury presiding. The old account books reveal the splendor of this metropolitan session. "Red marine" and "4 yds. of green baize" were purchased for the Confer-

ence, and bills of expense to the amount of £8 8s. were settled, to say nothing of £2 5s. 11d. "for keeping Bishop



DRAWN BY G. W. BENTE FROM THE ITINERARY IN ASBURY'S JOURNALS.

BISHOP ASBURY'S EPISCOPAL ROUND, 1788.

January 1, 1788, Asbury was on the Potomac; came to James River January 8; to Portsmouth, Va., January 14; Winton, N. C., January 30; Washington, N. C., February 6; Fayetteville, N. C., February 19; reached Charleston, March 5; crossed Savannah River April 5; Conference at Forks of Broad, April 9; Rutherford, N. C., April 22; May 3, at General Russell's; Salem, N. C., May 20; Petersburg, Va., June 8; Rehoboth, Va., July 5; Clarksburg, Va., July 10; Uniontown, Pa., Conference, July 22; Bath, Va., August 10; Leesburg, Va., September 4; Baltimore, September 10; New York, September 20; Dover, Del., October 20. November was devoted to work in the peninsula.

Asbury's horses," and "11s. for a bridle." New England was still a barrier to the itinerants, and from its inhospitable

border the bishop again turned to pass the winter in making the rounds of the Eastern circuits. He arrived in South Carolina in February, 1789. Here Coke joined him, and the two set out on a fresh round, beginning with Georgia and ending at New York—in that epoch-making Conference which determined to send preachers to New England and teachers



FEDERAL HALL, NEW YORK, 1789.

The seat of the government of the United States at the time of the Methodist Episcopal Address.

to the Indians, founded the Book Concern, and made to the newly inaugurated President of the United States the formal greetings of the American Methodists.

It was Asbury who suggested to the Conference the propriety of a formal address to President Washington. It was unanimously voted, and the John Street minister, the Rev. John Dickins, with the Rev. Thomas Morrell, an officer of the Revolution, waited upon the chief magistrate and secured an appointment for the episcopal visit. On June 2 or 3—the precise date is in debate—the audience took place, and Asbury, as a naturalized American, read the formal address

"with great self-possession, in an impressive manner," to which the President replied with fluency and animation."

The Address of the Bishops was written by Asbury, and read as follows:

We, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, humbly beg leave, in the name of our society collectively, in these United States, to express to you



DRAWN BY WARREN B. DAVIS.

MAJOR AND REV. THOMAS MORRELL.

the warm feelings of our hearts, and our sincere congratulations on your appointment to the presidency of these States. We are conscious from the signal proofs you have already given that you are a friend of mankind; and under this established idea, place as full confidence in your wisdom and integrity for the preservation of those civil and religious liberties which have been transmitted to us by the providence of God and the glorious Revolution, as we believe ought to be reposed in man. We have received the most grateful satisfaction from the humble and entire dependence

upon the great Governor of the universe, which you have repeatedly expressed, acknowledging him the source of every blessing, and particularly of the most excellent Constitution of these States, which is at present the admiration of the world, and may in future become its great exemplar for imitation; and hence we enjoy a holy expectation that you will always prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion, the grand end of our creation and present probationary existence. And we promise you our fervent prayers to the throne of grace, that God Almighty may endue you with all the graces and gifts of his Holy Spirit, that he may enable you to fill up your important station to his glory, the good of his Church, the happiness and prosperity of the United States, and the welfare of mankind.

Signed in behalf of the Methodist Episcopal Church,

THOMAS COKE.
FRANCIS ASBURY.

To whom Washington replied:

I return to you individually, and through you to your society collectively in the United States, my thanks for the demonstrations of affection, and the ex-



FROM THE "ATHENEUM" PORTRAIT BY GILBERT STUART.

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

pression of joy offered in their behalf on my late appointment. It shall be my endeavor to manifest the purity of my inclinations for promoting the happiness of mankind, as well as the sincerity of my desires to contribute whatever may be in my power toward the civil and religious liberties of the American people.

In pursuing this line of conduct I hope, by the assistance of divine Providence, not altogether to disappoint the confidence which you have been pleased to repose in me. It always affords me satisfaction when I find a concurrence of sentiment and practice between all conscientious men, in acknowledgments of homage to the great Governor of the universe, and in professions of support to a just civil government. After mentioning that I trust the people of every denomination, who demean themselves as good citizens, will have occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion, I must assure you in particular that I take in the kind-



THE FRANKLIN HOUSE, FRANKLIN SQUARE, NEW YORK.

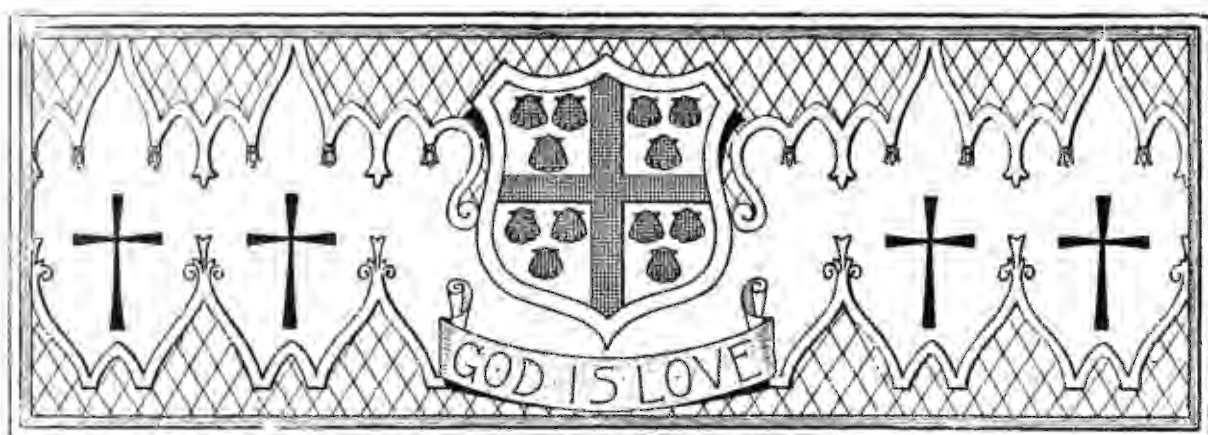
The residence on the right was occupied by President Washington in June, 1789.

est part the promise you make of presenting your prayers at the throne of grace for me, and that I likewise implore the divine benediction on yourselves and your religious community.

The Methodist Address was printed in a New York newspaper, and provoked an acrid communication from an "Inquirer," who compared the senior bishop's Tory professions and associations in England with the sentiments of this address, and charged him with "the extreme of hypocrisy" in signing it. A Methodist replied in Coke's defense. Major Morrell thought that some of the adverse criticism arose from

the fact that the Methodists had taken the lead of the older denominations in recognizing the new republic. A few weeks later the New York Packet had the grace to say:

“From the respectful and affectionate address of the bishops of this new and growing Church to the President of the United States, as well as from other documents, it appears that the whole society are warmly attached to the Constitution and government of the United States.”



CHAPTER XXXVI

Asbury and his Companion, Whatcoat

SECOND CHURCH IN NEW YORK.—A BEGINNING OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS.
—FIRST KENTUCKY CONFERENCE.—NEWS OF WESLEY'S DEATH.—
LETTER TO COKE.

THE time had come for the building of another church in New York city, and Elder Thomas Morrell was assigned to that work. To him, in the midst of his perplexities, Asbury wrote, "O, brother, piety, patience, courage, zeal, and industry will carry you through." Relying on these qualities, suitable lots were bought in Second, now Forsyth, Street, near Division. The corner stone was laid on August 11, and the building was dedicated on November 8, 1787. It was of rough stone, blue-stuccoed, fifty by seventy feet. It was without spire or belfry, and stood "in the fields eastward from the city," with a burying ground in the rear. Asbury pronounced it "commodious, elegant, yet plain." A revival—the best dedication for a church—broke out under Morrell's preaching, in which four hundred were converted. Some of the accompanying scenes attracted public notice. People said the Methodists were going mad, and threatened to complain to the police.

After Coke's departure Asbury traveled up the Hudson, where Freeborn Garrettson's young men had opened the way

for Methodism; thence across New Jersey and the entire State of Pennsylvania to Pittsburg and Uniontown. The outlook among the white settlers was encouraging, and, in furtherance of the action of the recent Conference, he wrote a letter to Cornplanter, sachem of the Senecas. "I hope

I am indebted to the Rev. Thomas Merrill on the fly leaf of the old John Street Record Book.

from May to 1st 1890	35
from 1st Sept 90 to 1st Jan 91	- 20
in the month of May 1790	- 6
in the month of July 1790	- 42
in the month of August 1790	- 52
April 1790	- 21
May 1790	- 11
June 1790	- 22
July 1790	- 45
August 1790	- 16
	<hr/> 368

Transcribed from the original manuscript

THE FRUITS OF FIFTEEN MONTHS, 1789, 1790.

Facsimile of the entry by Rev. Thomas Merrill on the fly leaf of the old John Street Record Book.

God will shortly visit these outcasts of men, and send messengers to publish the glad tidings of salvation among them," he recorded in his Journal.

Baltimore seemed like home to the homeless Asbury when he arrived there in September, to be welcomed by dear old friends, and to find the city in the throes of a powerful revival which garnered in many children of the first generation of Methodists.

Thomas Merrill

In the winter, accompanied by Whatcoat, the untiring bishop set off to hold the Conferences of 1790. At the South Carolina Conference in February an important minute was adopted :

“ Let us labor as the heart and soul of one man to establish Sunday schools in or near the place of public worship. Let persons be appointed by the bishops, elders, deacons, and preachers to teach (*gratis*) all that will attend, and have a capacity to learn, from 6 A. M. until 10, and from 2 P. M. until 6, where it does not interfere with public worship. The council shall compile a proper schoolbook to teach them learning and piety ”

There had been isolated Sabbath schools in a few localities before this, but not until now have we record of any Conference authority for them.

The Methodists of Charleston seemed to the bishop “ too mute and fearful,” and he attributed the dullness of their religious zeal to a lack of sufficient “ breast work.”

In the country circuits he judged spirituous liquors to be the chief enemy of religion. “ I am strongly inclined to think I am done with this road and people,” he writes, after a day of discouragements. “ A prophet of strong drink might suit them.”

The event of this year was the meeting of a Conference in Kentucky. From South Carolina Asbury and Whatcoat visited Georgia and then plunged into the wilderness. They encountered the usual hardships in passing the Tennessee mountains, but gained the last stockade without serious mishap. From this point to the seat of the Kentucky Conference at Masterson’s Station, five miles northwest of Lexington, they traveled one hundred and fifty miles under the protection of an armed band of frontiersmen, the region being

infested with hostile Indians. A watch was posted at night, "but," says Whatcoat, "I think I never traveled with more solemn awe and serenity of mind." Each day they stopped



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

HOUSE NEAR MASTERSON'S STATION, KY., WHERE THE FIRST WESTERN CONFERENCE WAS HELD.

The photograph was made May 15, 1890, on the occasion of the centennial of Kentucky Methodism, May 13-18, 1890.

to pray as regularly as to feed their horses. The bishop was sleepless and worn. To him the journey was "like being at sea, in some respects, and in others worse. Our way is over

mountains, steep hills, deep rivers, and muddy creeks—a thick growth of reeds for miles together, and no inhabitants but wild beasts and savage men.” They passed on the way the graves of twenty-four settlers from one camp who had been massacred by Indians a few nights previous. The episcopal party reached the Kentucky settlements in safety, held the little Conference of six preachers on May 16 and 17, 1790, and fixed the plan for a school, the Bethel Academy.

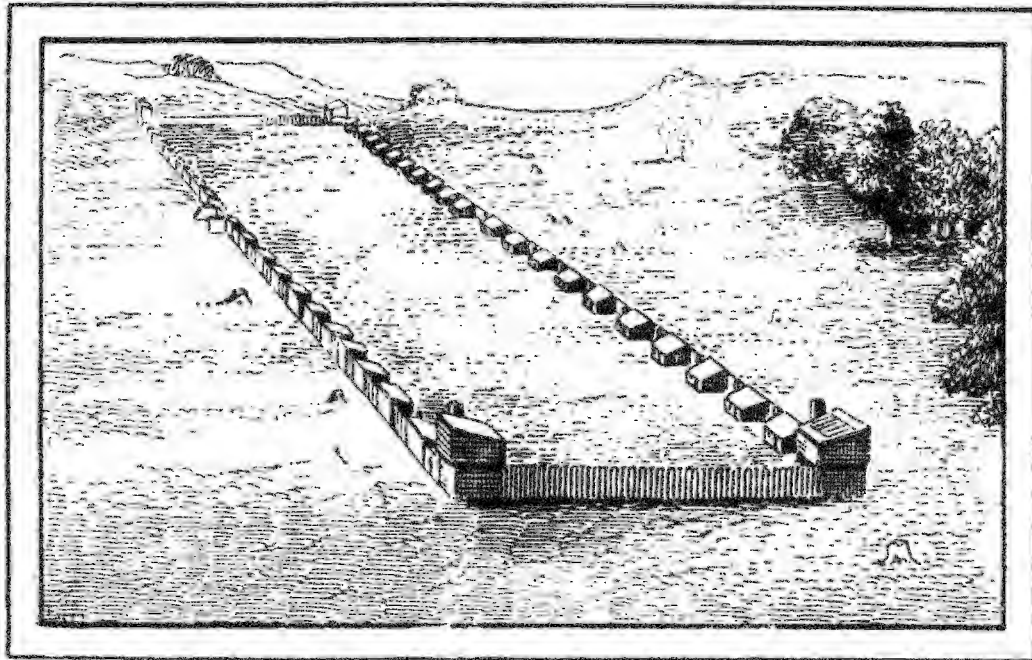
The Kentucky preachers were “indifferently clad, with emaciated bodies, and subject to hard fare; yet,” said Asbury, “I hope they are rich in faith.” For himself he felt repaid for the trying exertion, believing that the visit would “be for the good of the present and rising generation” in this region, the most fertile his eyes had ever seen.

A week later they set out for the east with an armed caravan of fifty people, organized for defense, and captained by a Methodist preacher, the bishop being somewhat in the capacity of an adjutant and quartermaster. In great haste and through anxious alarms they crossed the Indian country unmolested, and returned through the Tennessee wilderness to North Carolina, where the waiting Conference received their bishop “as one brought from the jaws of death.” He had ridden the five hundred miles in nine days, traveling two days and a night without lying down to rest! His journeyings from December 14, 1789, to April 20, 1790, had amounted to two thousand five hundred and seventy-eight miles.

Resuming now his usual course, Asbury worked his way northward by easy stages, renewing his friendship with Jarratt in Virginia, and reaching New York in October, where he preached in the new church and held the last Conference of the year.

In the spring of 1791 the two bishops were together again in the South until the news of Wesley's death recalled Coke to England. The notice of “that dear old man of God,” John Wesley, in Asbury's Journal, is characteristic:

“When we consider his plain and nervous writings; his uncommon talent for sermonizing and journalizing; that he



FROM THE PLAN BY GEORGE ROGERS CLARKE.

BRYANT STATION.

A famous stockade of the pioneer days in Kentucky.

had such a steady flow of animal spirits, so much of the spirit of government in him; his knowledge as an observer; his attainments as a scholar; his experience as a Christian; I conclude, his equal is not to be found among all the sons he hath brought up, nor his superior among all the sons of Adam he may have left behind. For myself, notwithstanding my long absence from Mr. Wesley, and a few unpleasant expressions in some of the letters the dear old man has written to me (occasioned by the misrepresentation of others), I feel the stroke most sensibly. I shall never read his works without reflecting on the loss which the Church of God and the world have sustained by his death.”

Both bishops preached memorial discourses on Wesley, and the Methodist churches were generally draped in mourning.



DEATH MASK OF JOHN WESLEY.

Photographed from the cast of Wesley's features, taken after his decease.

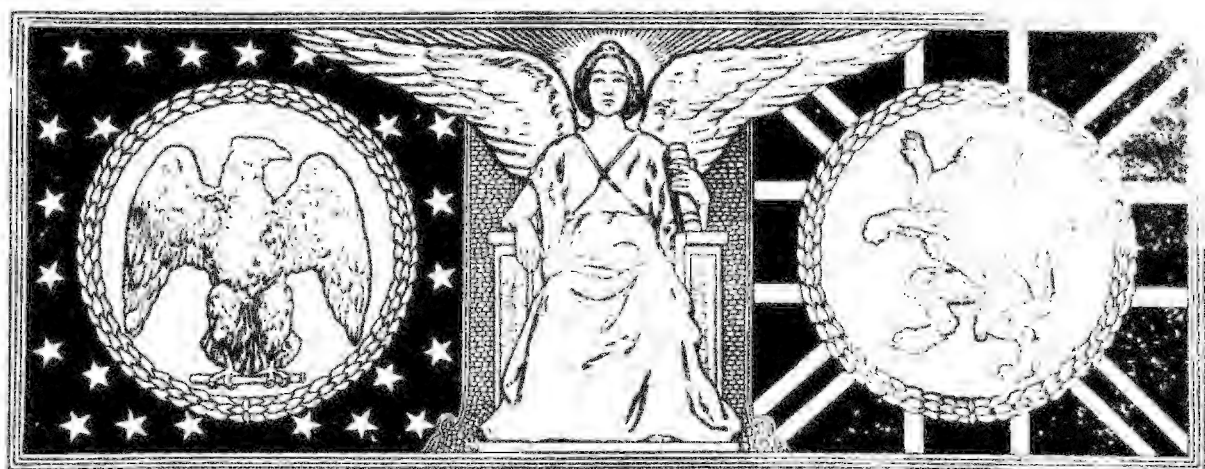
After the New York Conference of 1791 Asbury made his first long excursion into New England, visiting the circuits

which Jesse Lee had formed in Connecticut and Massachusetts. Before his return, in August, 1792, to hold the first session of the New England Conference at Lynn, Mass., he had again made the grand circuit as far south as Georgia, and had held a second Conference in Kentucky, in April, 1792. The passage of the mountains was, if possible, more arduous than before. "How much I have suffered in this journey is only known to God and myself," the bishop wrote. The air was full of politics (for Kentucky was just entering the Union) and rumors of Indian wars. "I am too much in company," he writes, "and hear so much about Indians, conventions, treaty, killing, and scalping, that my attention is drawn more to these things than I could wish." Returning eastward, the caravan avoided the main trail to elude the savages. Some nights the bishop snatched a few hours' sleep on the cold ground; at other times he kept awake to watch the drowsy sentries. In May he met the Holston preachers and returned to the seaboard by way of Uniontown, in southwestern Pennsylvania.

In the midst of such strenuous labors as these the bishop in America addressed the following letter to his colleague in England:

"Rejoice with me that the last has been a year of general blessing to the Church of God in this wilderness. We humbly hope two thousand souls were born of God, one of which is well ascertained in Jersey and York. I have served the Church upward of twenty-five years in Europe and America. All the property I have gained is two old horses, the constant companions of my toil six, if not seven, thousand miles every year. When we have no ferryboats they swim the rivers. As to clothing I am nearly the same as at the first; neither have I silver nor gold, nor any property. My

confidential friends know that I lie not in this matter. I am resolved not to claim any property in the Book Concern. Increase as it may, it will be sacred to invalid preachers, the college, and the schools. I would not have my name mentioned as doing, having, or being anything but dust. I soar, indeed, but it is over the tops of the highest mountains we have, which may vie with the Alps. I creep sometimes upon my hands and knees up the slippery ascent; and to serve the Church, and the ministers of it, what I gain is many a reflection from both sides of the Atlantic. I have lived long enough to be loved and hated, to be admired and feared."



CHAPTER XXXVII

The British-American Bishop

FIRST VISIT.—ANTISLAVERY SERMONS.—AT MOUNT VERNON.—CHARLES WESLEY'S ALARM.—ANTIGUA.—SECOND VISIT.—THIRD VISIT.—REVIVAL SCENES.—THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE OF 1789.—FOURTH VISIT.—SAD NEWS.

WHILE Asbury's must ever be the commanding figure of the early days of American Methodism, the work of his colleague, Coke, must be kept in view. "The little doctor" was compact of energy, and, though his brief residence in this country and his great and absorbing interests in church and mission work abroad militated against his popularity and usefulness here, yet he enjoyed the highest respect and cooperated cordially with Asbury in counsel and execution.

At the close of the Christmas Conference he departed at once for the North, stopping briefly at Abingdon, Md., to prepare for the building of the new college. Crossing the Susquehanna on the ice, he came to Philadelphia, and after a few days' sojourn went on to New York. Here he preached in Wesley Chapel, whose trustees had just bought prayer books, supplied a mahogany altar rail, and were beginning to apply the name of "church" to Embury's modest preach-

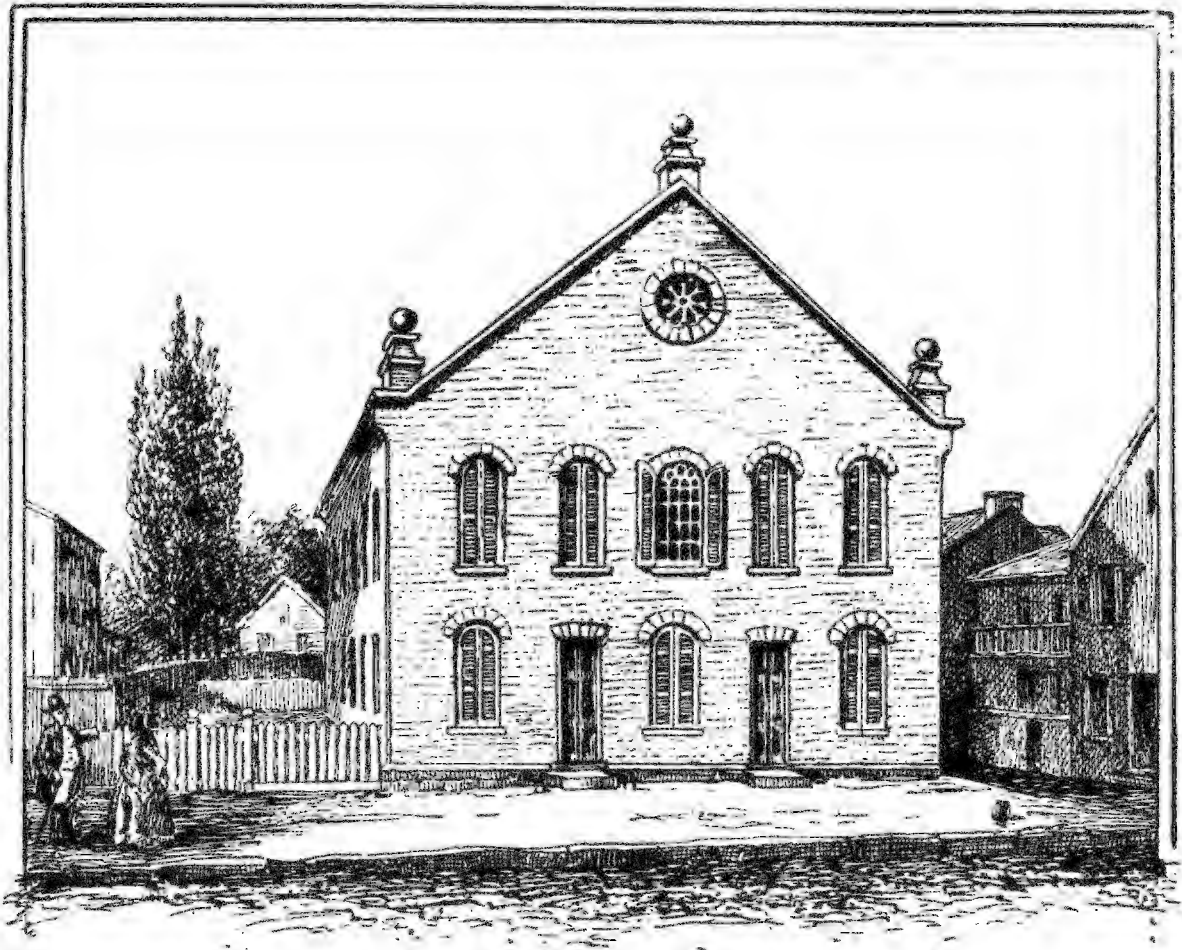
inghouse; for henceforward the Methodists need not go beyond their own rooftree to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Coke collected money for the Nova Scotia missionaries, and in February essayed the dangerous passage from New York to Paulus Hook (Jersey City), and so by way of Philadelphia to the hospitable shelter of Perry Hall.

The little house in Lovely Lane, Baltimore, the birthplace of the Church, was not large enough to hold the throngs who came daily to hear the English doctor, and he prevailed upon the principal Methodists in the city to erect a building worthier of the capital of Methodism. The sum of £500 was soon subscribed, the mother church was sold, and the historic "Light Street Church," the scene of many General Conferences, was built to take its place.

At the end of the winter Coke exchanged the luxury of Perry Hall for the saddle, and rode to North Carolina to hold Conference with his colleague. The hardships of this ride opened his eyes to the rough side of the American itinerancy. He lost his way in the woods, was mired in the swamps, and baffled by spring freshets in the bridgeless and unfordable streams. While crossing one stream his horse was swept from under him, and he escaped by scrambling among the branches of a floating tree. At last, much frightened and in sorry plight, he reached dry land. It was a shivering mile to the nearest plantation, where kindly negroes befriended him. "That night," he says, "I lay on a bed on the ground and slept soundly. Thus was I wonderfully preserved, and shall, I trust, never forget so awful but very instructive a scene."

Such experiences marked his progress southward to Green Hill's, in North Carolina, where the Southern preachers met in Conference for three days with both superintendents.

While in Virginia Coke met one who had until now been the foremost friend of the Methodists—the Rev Devereux Jarratt, of the Anglican Church. As Asbury and Coke now represented a Church, the rival of his own and not a mere society, he was less friendly and somewhat



DRAWN BY JOHN P. DAVIS.

FROM A LITHOGRAPH.

OLD LIGHT STREET CHURCH, BALTIMORE.

disposed to cavil at the validity of their orders. Their stringent rule against slaveholding was an offense also. "The secret is that he has twenty-four slaves of his own," says Coke. This region was not the most favorable for antislavery sermons, but Coke feared no man. He tells us that the unawakened conspired to flog him, and a woman, whose lofty headdress seems to have drawn his fire, offered these base fellows £50 "if they would give that little doctor one hun-

dred lashes." But thanks to the bold front of two of the brethren, one a magistrate and the other a colonel, the outbreak did not occur. Rage was not the only product of this bold preaching, and the preacher had his reward in the news that many slaves had been manumitted.

In May, at Brother Mason's, in Virginia, says Coke, "a great many principal friends met us to insist on a repeal of the slave rules." But the threat to withdraw the preachers altogether from that region silenced their protest. A petition of Methodists was being circulated in North Carolina praying the Legislature for the legal right of manumission, and now the Virginia preachers were urged to get hands to a petition to the General Assembly "for immediate or gradual emancipation." In furtherance of this object the two superintendents sought an interview with General George Washington.

Having been courteously bidden to dine with the general, the two Methodist superintendents went to Mount Vernon. Dr Coke is the historian of the visit: "He received us very politely, and was very open to access. He is quite the plain country gentleman." After dinner they "opened the grand business" on which they came—the petition for emancipation. "He informed us that he was of our sentiments, and had signified his thoughts on the subject to most of the great men of the State; that he did not see it proper to sign the petition, but if the Assembly took it into consideration, would signify his sentiments by a letter." Though pressed to remain overnight, the King's business required haste, and the two envoys departed.

On the first of June the Conference met at Baltimore. Coke preached that noon and early the next morning, and then took ship for England, bidding an affectionate farewell

to the earnest men whose hearts he had learned to know during his first half year in America.

The sermon preached by Coke at Asbury's "ordination to



FROM THE "ATHENÆUM" PORTRAIT BY GILBERT STUART.

MRS. MARTHA WASHINGTON,

the office of superintendent" was printed, and copies of it were not long in reaching England. Its onslaught on the Church of England in America, and its assumption of the episcopal

name and office, were heard with alarm and sorrow by Charles Wesley, ever fearful lest the Wesleyan societies of England should cut loose from the Established Church. "When once you began ordaining in America," wrote Charles to John, "I knew, and you knew, that your preachers here would never rest till you ordained them. You told me they would separate by and by. The doctor tells us the same. His Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore was intended to beget a Methodist Episcopal Church here. You know he comes armed with your authority to make us all Dissenters." John Wesley came promptly to the rescue: "I believe Dr. Coke is as free from ambition as from covetousness. He has done nothing rashly that I know; but he has spoken rashly, which he retracted the moment I spoke to him of it. He is now a right hand to me. If you will not or cannot help me yourself, do not hinder those who can and will. I must and will save as many souls as I can while I live, without being careful about what may possibly be when I die."

Instead of pursuing his "avowed design and resolution to get all the Methodists of the three kingdoms into a distinct, compact body," as Charles Wesley had feared, Coke went through the kingdoms collecting funds for missionary enterprises in the British provinces of America. His active mind looked forward to a great missionary organization, in behalf of which he now printed his historic pamphlet, *An Address to the Pious and Benevolent, Proposing an Annual Subscription for the Support of Missionaries*.

On September 24, 1786, Coke again embarked for America, with a mission fund and three preachers for the work in Nova Scotia which young Black had championed so ably at the Christmas Conference. His vessel, a small brig, experienced terrible gales, so violent and prolonged that the cap-

tain began to look upon his pious passenger as a Jonah, and one day, finding him at prayer, threw overboard some of his books and papers, making as if he would have sent the owner after them. On the night of October 30 the hurricanes threw the vessel on her beam ends, and the Methodists gave themselves up to prayer. "It was not until after this," to quote from Coke's diary, "and we had sung a hymn to-



FROM THE DRAWING BY T. O. RUCKLE.

AN EARLY CONFERENCE IN BALTIMORE.

The session is in the Conference room, over Light Street parsonage. Reproduced from the lithograph in Roberts's Centenary Pictorial Album.

gether, that the foresail was shivered, and by that means the masts were saved and probably the ship itself." After two months of buffetings and driftings the baffled and leaking vessel dropped anchor in the sunny harbor of Antigua, a thousand miles south of its destination.

Coke found work ready to his hand in this island. Nathaniel Gilbert and his Methodist slave women had sown

Gospel seed there years before, and a good Methodist mechanic, John Baxter, had supplemented their labors and built a preachinghouse. The work was ripe for an organizer of Coke's zeal and ability, and he devoted the winter to preparing for an advance of Methodism through this part of the West Indies.

Thus it happened that, instead of reaching the United States by the way of the North, the English superintendent landed at Charleston, in South Carolina, at the end of February, 1787. He found a Methodist society of about forty whites and fifty-three colored, and opened for them their church on Cumberland Street. It was a plain structure of wood, sixty feet by forty feet, with galleries for the negroes. Asbury soon arrived, and here in the last week in March the two bishops held the first Conference in South Carolina. The reports from the scattered laborers in this end of the continent were such as to leave Coke "exulting in the prosperity of Zion."

The two apostolic men together traveled northward, visiting the backwoods circuits. The Englishman writes, "I have got into my old romantic way of life, preaching in the midst of great forests, with scores and sometimes hundreds of horses tied to the trees." Great things had been wrought in these groves. "When I was in America before," he writes on the Peedee Circuit, "there were but twenty in society and it was much doubted at the Conference whether it would be for the glory of God to send even one preacher to this part of the country. But now, chiefly by the means of two young men, Hope Hull and Jeremiah Mastin, the societies consist of eight hundred and twenty-three members; and no less than two-and-twenty preachinghouses have been

erected in this single preaching circuit in the course of the last year."

In Virginia the Spirit was mightily abroad. Coke preached to four thousand people in the woods of Mecklenburg County, far from towns. To the Conference there came an appeal for help from the pioneer preachers in the Indian country, beyond the mountains. The perils were great, the earthly rewards none, yet men were found to go. "What can we not do or suffer when the love of Christ constrains!" exclaimed Coke, at this exhibition of devotion.

At the Baltimore Conference in May arose the first conflict between the international itinerant and the American preachers, which resulted in the restriction of Coke's authority and the dropping of Wesley's name from the American Minutes—an implication of robust independence on the part of the infant Church. The two bishops proceeded north as far as New York, and on May 27, 1787, Coke's second visit to America was terminated by his departure from Philadelphia for England.

In February, 1789, he again set foot in Charleston, S. C., having come this time, not unwillingly, by way of the West Indies, where his missions among the colored people were being ardently pushed. In company with Asbury he traveled toward Grant's, in Wilkes County, the seat of the second Georgia Conference. The country was rough and raw, the fare monotonous—hog and hominy, for the most part, with eggs, and a dish of tea from Asbury's saddlebags—and the beds conducive to sore bones. Coke's Journal notes the discomforts, but declares, "The great revival, the rapidity of the work, the peculiar consolations of God's Spirit, and the retirement I met with in these vast forests overbalanced every trial." Even Asbury confessed that his experiences on

this occasion impaired his health. The Conference began on March 9, and was notable for the appointment of a committee to obtain endowment for a "Wesley College" in Georgia.

The two bishops opened the South Carolina Conference at Charleston, March 17, 1789, and, though the newspapers attacked the Methodists, there was no rioting as on former occasions. The gain of membership had been nine hundred and seven, and the work was prospering. A month later the bishops listened to reports of similar prosperity within the bounds of the North State. Preachers and letters were received there from Kentucky, "the new Western world," as it was beginning to be called. The cry of these pioneers was for help in founding a Christian college beyond the mountains, and the overtaxed bishops held out hopes that the task could be accomplished.

Crossing into Virginia, "the great people of Halifax County came in their chariots to hear me," writes Coke, who was not without vanity. "There were not less than five colonels in the congregation"—not a surprising feature of many a Southern assemblage to this day! As a result of recent revivals a class of thirteen young men offered themselves to the bishops at the Virginia Conference, and for once the circuits were adequately manned.

In Maryland Coke's preaching was accompanied by such demonstrations as had marked the Virginia revival of a dozen years previous. At Annapolis the shoutings startled him, "but soon the tears began to flow," he says; "and I have seldom found a more comforting or strengthening time. Whether there be wildfire in it or not, I do most certainly wish there was such a work at this time in England." In Baltimore, where in Conference week he preached to two thousand people, hundreds broke out into prayer or praise or

exhortation after the sermon. One elder was the means of the conversion of seven poor penitents in one little group within fifteen minutes, and it was two o'clock in the morning before the company dispersed—many of them to reassemble for a morning sermon at five o'clock. Asbury's ministrations were similarly accompanied, and Coke, after a calm study of the strange phenomena, gave them his approval. Even the enemies of the Methodists, he declares, admit that these stormy meetings have wrought "gracious and wonderful changes upon multitudes."

From fervid Maryland to Jersey was a step into a more temperate clime. Old as the work was here, it lacked life, and the returns to the Conference of 1789 showed a serious loss. New York, however, was found astir with a new zeal. Faithful John Dickins was preacher in charge at John Street. Henry Willis was elder for the city and Long Island, and Freeborn Garrettson, with a corps of zealous missionaries, was opening the Hudson River valley to Methodism. The Conference—the second which had been held here—began on May 28, and was an historic session. "We have a great revival and a great increase," writes Coke, "in consequence of which we are going to build a second church."

Asbury's brief note touches upon two great enterprises: "Our work opens in New York State; New England stretcheth out the hand to our ministry." The latter clause had reference to his appointment of Jesse Lee to carry the Methodist construction of the Gospel into the land of the Calvinists. It was Garrettson who had opened New York State with a set of inexperienced but zealous youths. At this Conference plans were laid for the organization of a book concern, and Coke at least determined that Methodism should undertake a mission to the Western Indians, who had been brought

rudely into collision with civilization in the rapid advance of settlement beyond the mountains.

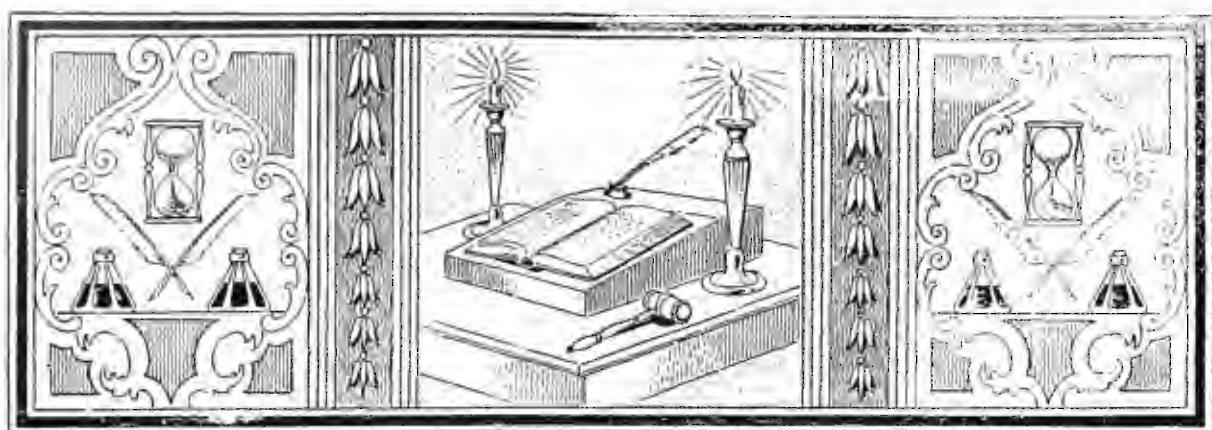
Coke embarked at New York for England on June 5, 1789. He was scarcely out of sight of land before the newspapers began to find fault with him, a Briton, for signing his name to a congratulatory address which the bishops in behalf of the Conference had presented to President Washington. A member of the Methodist Episcopal Church defended him in an able letter and the matter soon blew over. It perhaps never came to Coke at all, whose mind was too full of plans for the extension of the kingdom of heaven to have much thought for the politics of this world.

It was evidently Coke's design to spend about six months of every alternate year in America, but his fourth visit was cut short at both ends. After a hasty inspection of the West Indian missions he sailed from Jamaica for Charleston, but after a month of perilous adventures was wrecked on Edisto Island. He finally reached his destination on February 23, 1791. Asbury awaited him there. Together they held the South Carolina and Georgia Conferences, and on their way preached to the Catawba Indians, who seemed rather indifferent to their doctrines, but were anxious to secure the aid of the whites on the warpath. Coke had traveled far, but their chief, "a grave old man," who walked with "a mighty staff," was an object of curiosity to him. He mentions also the silver nose-rings of the men, the white cotton garments of the people, and the substantial quality of their cabins, far better than those of the Irish peasantry.

The North Carolina Conference session was noted for "a remarkable spirit of prayer." Earnest preachers were present from the isolated circuits beyond the mountains, who made these rare gatherings with the brethren seasons of great

refreshment. “Every night, before we concluded, heaven itself seemed to be opened in our souls.”

On April 29, at Port Royal, Va., the news of John Wesley's death, in London, on the second of the preceding month, reached Coke. His first grief was too deep for tears. Wesley had been his spiritual father, had charged him with the heaviest responsibilities, and had acknowledged his dependence upon him. Important as were his engagements in America, he felt that England needed him more, and at once began his preparations for departure. On May 16 he set sail from Newcastle, Del., not to return until the eve of the General Conference of 1792.



CHAPTER XXXVIII

A Declaration of Independence

THREE VICTORIES.—THE TILT WITH COKE.—A GRIEVANCE AGAINST
WESLEY.—DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

THRICE within the first decade of its history did the American preachers assert with energy and success their authority as the governing body in the Methodist Episcopal Church. They rebuked Coke for what they considered a presumptuous invasion of their own rights, and placed strict limits upon his power; they openly disregarded one of John Wesley's express injunctions and temporarily dropped the name of their venerated founder from their Minutes; and, finally, they frustrated a plan for the government of the Church by an appointive council—the establishment of which must have transferred the seat of legislative power from the body of the preachers to the bishops.

The first two points at controversy came up in 1787, and were closely related. At the Conference of the previous year three Conference sessions had been appointed for the year 1787—the first in North Carolina, in May, the second in Virginia, in June; and the third, and principal one, at Abingdon, in Maryland, beginning on Tuesday, July 24. Coke, without consultation with the preachers, took upon himself while absent from America to alter the date and to call a General

Conference of the preachers to meet at Baltimore on May 1. For this action he brought a show of authority in the nature of a written request addressed to him by Mr Wesley, suggesting the change of place and date.

The Oxonian Doctor of Laws had not taken sufficient account of the independent spirit of the plain men who composed the American Conference. They were in no mood to have their arrangements disturbed to suit the personal convenience of a superintendent who spent most of his time in England. When he met the preachers in Conference at Baltimore he found himself sharply criticised, though he termed the ground of their quarrel “the utmost subtilty of Satan.” Then he breaks out: “But, glory be to God! Yea, glory forever be ascribed to his sacred name, the devil was completely defeated. Our painful contests, I trust, have produced the utmost indissoluble union between my brethren and me. We mutually yielded and mutually submitted, and the silken cords of love and affection were tied to the horns of the altar forever and forever.”

What the “mutual concession” was, of which Coke makes so much, is not apparent, but the following document from his own hand makes it clear what at least one side yielded:

THE CERTIFICATE OF DR. COKE TO THE CONFERENCE.

I do solemnly engage by this instrument that I never will, by virtue of my office as superintendent of the Methodist Church, during my absence from the United States of America exercise any government whatever in said Methodist Church. And I do also engage that I will exercise no privilege in the said Church when present, except that of ordaining according to the regulations and laws already existing or hereafter to be made in said Church, and that of presiding when present in Conference, and, lastly, that of traveling at large.

Given under my hand the 2d day of May, in the year 1787.

THOMAS COKE.

JOHN TUNNELL, }
JOHN HAGERTY, } Witnesses.
NELSON REED, }

Having thus set metes and bounds about its English bishop, the Conference took up the subject of the relation of the Church to Wesley himself. They had already spoken on this topic. On the first page of the Discipline adopted at the Christmas Conference (1784) the Methodist Episcopal Church in America declared in answer to Question 2 :

“ During the life of the Rev Mr. Wesley we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the Gospel, ready in matters belonging to Church government to obey his commands.”

When that voluntary submission was put to vote the prudent Asbury had “sat mute and modest” in his place, not venturing to make an unseemly protest against such a token of filial regard, but foreseeing the awkward entanglements which might spring from such submission to an authority three thousand miles distant.

An awkward situation soon arose. On September 6, 1786, Wesley addressed the following note, already alluded to, to Coke, then in Great Britain, but soon to revisit these shores :

“ DEAR SIR: I desire that you would appoint a General Conference of all our preachers in the United States, to meet at Baltimore on May 1, 1787, and that Mr. Richard Whatcoat may be appointed superintendent with Mr. Francis Asbury.

JOHN WESLEY.

“To the Rev. Dr. Coke.”

Mr Wesley, moreover, “had given directions for Brother F Garrettson to be ordained a superintendent for Nova Scotia.”

To acquiesce in these “directions” would have been to place the American Church completely under Mr. Wesley’s control. It was one thing in a moment of excitement to compliment the octogenarian founder of their religious sys-

tem by calling him their "father in the Gospel;" but it was quite another to humiliate themselves in the eyes of their countrymen by meekly taking orders from him and accepting



FROM AN ENGRAVING BY SMITH, AFTER THE PAINTING BY BUCKLE.

REV. NELSON REED AT THE AGE OF 82.

such bishops as he might designate. Meekness was not the leading virtue of the preachers in dealing with this question. They first made Coke answer for the altered date of their

Conference, and exacted from him the famous "certificate" restricting his functions. The debate on the proposition for two new superintendents brought out frank expression of opinions. As to Nova Scotia, it was insisted that "if ordained for that station, he [Garrettson] should confine himself wholly to that place and not be at liberty to return again to the United States," a condition upon which Garrettson concluded to decline the honor.

Against the promotion of Whatcoat it was well urged that his inexperience—he had been but two years out from England—rendered him unfit for the duties of the superintendency. The preachers believed they saw in this appointment a cover for the recall of Asbury, whose independence was said to be distasteful to Wesley.

In defense of his master's program Coke quoted the filial declaration of the Christmas Conference. But the preachers stood their ground. Some declined to be held to that article, alleging that they were not present when it was voted; others had altered their opinion of its expediency. A majority voted to rescind that engagement, and it was accordingly dropped from the Minutes.

Inasmuch as it was believed that the present trouble was due to Wesley's lack of information touching American affairs, the brethren "wrote him a long and loving letter, and requested him to come over to America and visit his spiritual children."

The memoirs of the early American preachers still sparkle with the indignation which these men felt over these assumptions. Noticing the opinion of "some disaffected persons," that it was improper for the Conference to retract its engagement with Wesley, the Virginian, Jesse Lee, exclaims, "If there was anything improper in the business, it was in entering

into the engagement, and not in departing from it." Thomas Ware saw in Wesley's missive a plan to deprive the American preachers of their legislative power and vest it in his own appointees, the Englishmen—Coke, Asbury, and Whatcoat. The impossibility of forcing such a usage upon us, says Ware, was "a fact which we thought Mr. Wesley could not but have known, had he known us as well as we ought to have been known by Dr. Coke." That the scene was enlivened by an outburst of patriotic sentiment appears from the testimony of the Rev. William Phœbus, who was present when one ardent speaker cried out: "Mr. Wesley takes too much on him, yea, too much to be borne with by Americans. If his power be not checked, he may increase his impositions; and it may grow enormous, even to popery!"

As Asbury had sat silent through the voting on the adoption of the minute, he now refrained from speaking on the motion to rescind. But this did not save him from Wesley's ire. The dropping of his name by the American Church seemed like a prophecy of the dismemberment of the Wesleyan body which he feared would follow his death. Of Asbury's part in the affair he bitterly wrote: "It was not well judged of Brother Asbury to suffer, much less directly encourage, the foolish step of the last Conference." In his own defense Asbury afterward stated that he would have submitted to Wesley's supremacy, "but the Americans were too jealous to bind themselves to yield to him in all things relative to Church government."

It was some time before the troubled waters subsided. Coke was restive under the indignities which he and his venerable superior had received at the hands of these unabashed republicans, and could scarcely be restrained from traveling through the connection and uttering his protest in the ear of

the Church at large. There were rumors of division and secession, some preachers still preferring the rule of the renowned English reformer to that of their own colleagues. "Many," says one who knew, "felt like being scattered when the shepherd had received so many blows from his friends."

When the heat of the hour had passed, and the preachers had time to recover from their irritation and alarm, they regretted the harshness of their words and the abruptness with which they had cast off the tie which bound them to Wesley. "We felt ourselves grieved," says Rev Thomas Morrell, "that the good old man was hurt, and determined to give him every satisfaction in our power consistent with our rights." Accordingly, in 1789, two years after the stormy session at Baltimore, the Church honored itself by writing John Wesley's name again on the roll of its leaders. There was no relic of the old submission, but simply the question and answer:

"Question 1. Who are the persons that exercise the episcopal office in the Methodist Church in Europe and America?

"Answer. John Wesley, Thomas Coke, and Francis Asbury, by regular order and succession."

The rights once claimed by Wesley were never reasserted, and his death a few years later parted the last visible tie between the original Wesleyan Conference and the Church in America. Such was the crisis through which the Church passed triumphantly in 1787, the result being what Dr. Neely, in his Governing Conference, has well called our "ecclesiastical Declaration of Independence."



CHAPTER XXXIX

The First Methodist College

DICKINS'S SUGGESTION.—A COLLEGE AT ARINGTON.—THE BISHOP'S PLAN AND APPEAL.—STRICT RULES.—COKE'S COLLEGE OPENED.—THE BURDEN OF DEBT.—FIRE.—ACADEMY AT BALTIMORE.—OTHER ENTERPRISES.

THE first great enterprise of the newly organized Church was the founding of a college. In fact, as early as 1779, while the war yet raged and the societies were disintegrated, Asbury noted in his Journal, "We spent an evening at Widow Bready's, and had some talk about erecting a Kingswood School in America." His companion was probably John Dickins, a "gloomy" Englishman "of great piety, great skill in learning, who drinks in Greek and Latin swiftly; yet," to follow Asbury to his characteristic conclusion, "prays much and walks closely with God." The taste for books and love of learning he brought with him from Eton College. At Asbury's request he drew up in June, 1780, a plan for a school and a subscription to raise funds. "This," said Asbury, "was what came out a college. I trust this may be for the glory of God and the good of thousands."

Nothing came of the matter at the time. But in 1784, when Coke and Asbury met for the first time at Barratt's Chapel

and opened the plans for the organization of the Church, the project of a school for the Methodists was among the topics discussed.

The Christmas Conference in December authorized the plans for a college to be established at Abingdon, Md., and to bear the name "Cokesbury" in honor of the two superintendents. A collection amounting to £45 15s. was taken in the Conference, and the bishops were instructed to raise funds and push the work with all diligence.

"The Plan for Erecting a College, intended to advance Religion in America," was prepared by the bishops and presented to the members and friends of the Church. Its principal contents were as follows: "The college is built at Abingdon, in Maryland, on a healthy spot, enjoying a fine air and very extensive prospect. It is to receive for education and board the sons of the elders and preachers of the Methodist Church, poor orphans, and the sons of the subscribers and of other friends. It will be expected that all our friends who send their children to the college, will, if they be able, pay a moderate sum for their education and board. The rest will be taught and boarded, and, if our finances will allow it, clothed gratis. The institution is also intended for the benefit of our young men who are called to preach, that they may receive a measure of that improvement which is highly expedient as a preparative for public service. A teacher of the languages, with an assistant, will be provided, as also an English master to teach with the utmost propriety both to read and speak the English language; nor shall any other branch of literature be omitted which shall be thought necessary for any of the students. Above all, especial care shall be taken that due attention be paid to the religion and morals of the children, and to

the exclusion of all such as continue of an ungovernable temper."

The bishops promised that the new institution should conserve three principal ends:

1. To stand in the place of a parent in providing for the instruction and support of the sons of the preachers—"men who desire nothing on earth but to promote the glory of God by saving their own souls and the souls of those that hear them."

2. To give support and Christian education to poor orphans.

3. To maintain a seminary "where religion and learning may go hand in hand," for the sons of "our competent friends," free from "the temptations to which they are too much exposed in most of the public schools."

All "who wish well to the work of God" were urged to contribute. "Do what you can," ran the appeal, "to comfort the parents who give up their all for you, and to give their children cause to bless you. You will be no poorer for what you do on such an occasion. God is a good paymaster. And you know in doing this you lend unto the Lord; in due time he shall repay you."

Instruction was offered in "English, Latin, Greek, logic, rhetoric, history, geography, natural philosophy, and astronomy," and as soon as means should allow, "Hebrew, French, and German," arranged in a curriculum equal to that of any college in the United States.

It was desired that pupils should be admitted as young as seven years, that the entire course of their education might be under the same masters. Care was to be taken "that all who shall be educated in our college may be kept at the utmost distance, as from vice in general, so from softness and effeminacy of manners." Early rising should be enforced

and “play,” meaning sport, prohibited—Locke, Rousseau, Peter the Great, and Vergil being cited in approval of the bishops’ plan to substitute agriculture and architecture as “pleasing recreations for the mind and body.”

Everything “immodest” was to be excluded from the college text-books as well as from the “choice and universal library.”

In conclusion, it was pointed out that to help the college was to promote the public good: “enabling those ‘flames of fire,’ who might otherwise be obliged to confine themselves to an exceedingly contracted sphere of action for the support of their families, to carry the savor of the Gospel to the remotest corners of these United States. The four guineas a year for tuition, we are persuaded, cannot be lowered, if we give the students that finished education which we are determined they shall have. And, though our principal object is to instruct them in the doctrines, principles, and practice of Christianity, yet we trust that our college will in time send forth men that will be blessings to their country in every laudable office and employment of life, thereby uniting the two greatest ornaments of intelligent beings, which are too often separated: deep learning and genuine piety ”

A list of thirty-two minute rules for the conduct of the future students was annexed. Pupils were to rise at five o’clock, summer and winter. Public prayers were at six, and from their close until breakfast at seven the boy might “recreate” himself by gardening, walking, riding, and bathing, without doors, and the carpenter’s, joiner’s, cabinet-maker’s, or turner’s business, within doors. After breakfast there were four hours of close study; then more “recreation,” relieved by dinner; study again until supper at six o’clock;

prayers at seven, and recreative employment until the nine o'clock curfew.

Rule 18 would not be popular in these days of college athletics: "The students shall be indulged with nothing which the world calls play. Let this rule be observed with the



DRAWN BY J. P. DAVIS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

COKESBURY CHAPEL AND SITE OF COKESBURY COLLEGE,
ABINGDON, MD., 1900.

strictest nicety; for those who play when they are young will play when they are old," a reflection which Wesley had written in the rules of Kingswood School.

The sum of £1,057 17s. sterling was subscribed.

Two days after the Conference adjourned Coke was in Abingdon giving "orders that the materials for the construction of the college be procured forthwith." Four acres of land were purchased of Richard Dallam and Aquila Paca for

£60, and on June 5, 1785, "warm as it was," Asbury stood on the site of the proposed building and preached the foundation sermon from Psalm lxxviii, 4-8, speaking with liberty and in the "faith to believe that the work would go on."

It was a period of severe financial depression in the republic, and money was scarce. When has it not been scarce if a plea goes out to the people for a school? Before the roof was raised the enterprise was £900 in debt. Two days before Christmas, 1786, Asbury notes, "Our college is still without a cover, and our managers, as I expected, almost out of breath." On Christmas Day the trustees met and agreed to finish two rooms in the building, and send to England for the principal teacher, who had been recommended to them. They had already expended £2,000.

The college building was one hundred and eight feet long, forty feet wide, and three stories high. It included an assembly hall, recitation rooms, and dormitories. It was pronounced to be in "dimensions and style of architecture fully equal, if not superior, to anything of the kind in the country." Before it was completed it had cost \$40,000, most of which was collected in small sums from a large number of contributors, by far the greater number of whom were poor people.

The first head of the college was the Rev. Mr. Heath, a middle-aged Church of England clergyman, who had been master of a grammar school at Kidderminster. The letter in which Coke offered him the position has some interesting passages. "The college," he writes, "is erected on the plan of our school at Kingswood. I believe we shall have about one hundred scholars; but we intend to begin with fifty, and three masters. The head master's salary will be £60 sterling, and lodging in the college, board, washing, etc., for himself and family. The situation is an eminence

and in a healthy part of the country. There are several of our principal friends living in the neighborhood. One family on the spot (Mr. Dallam's) you'll find very agreeable.



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH FURNISHED BY PRESIDENT JOHN F. GOUCHER

COKESBURY COLLEGE BELL, 1900.

The bell is hung in the office of the Woman's College, Baltimore.

There is a brick chapel already built on the spot. The college itself (we give high names to things in America) is built, I think, on a much larger plan than Kingswood school. There will be two large schools. It is within twenty-four miles from Baltimore, where you may frequently preach and

have the largest congregation we have on the continent.

By this step you will come wholly among us."

Heath accepted. Wesley, who had cast his keen eye upon him, pronounced him "thoroughly qualified." He came over in the fall of 1787, and on December 6 the first Methodist college in the New World opened its doors to twenty-five students, the vanguard of the host now in our educational institutions. Asbury was present at the time, and delivered a sermon on Trust in the Lord, and on the Sunday following solemnly dedicated the edifice, preaching on this occasion from the significant words, "O man of God, there is death in the pot."

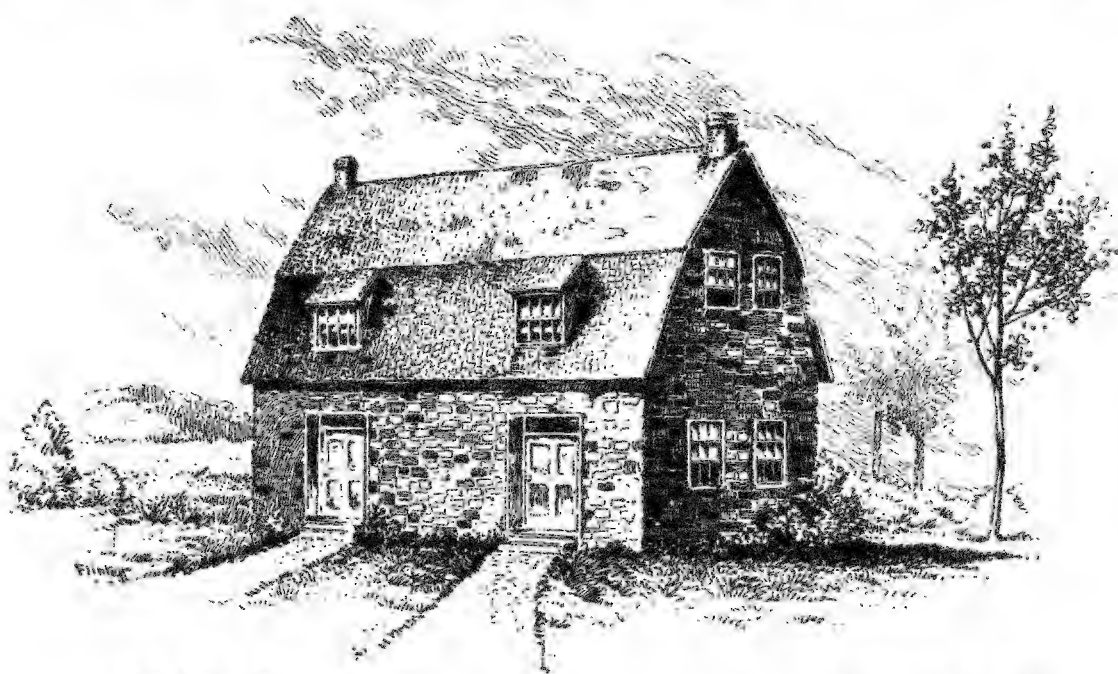
Wesley's lively interest in the school—though he detested the name Cokesbury, as savoring of worldly vanity—is attested by a letter from him to the head master, proposing a curriculum of study which he claims to be "the best and shortest method which can be taken to make children critical scholars in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew "

Troubles beset the college from the first. Debts always shadowed it. Dissension broke out among the faculty, and within a year the president retired under charges of incompetent Latin scholarship. A new president, Dr. Jacob Hall, next took charge, with a staff of superior teachers. For some years the attendance fluctuated from thirty to upward of one hundred. Asbury's Journals often mention its affairs with solicitude for its temporal condition and regret that religion does not more abound among the boys. In 1791 Coke found seventy students, and remarked: "Many from the Southern States are sending their young men here to finish their education. The fear of God seems to pervade the college." Coke, in Baltimore one moment, in the Bahamas the next, and most of the time beyond the Atlantic, might catch

rosy glimpses of Abingdon, but upon Asbury's shoulders the burden weighed continually. In the winter of 1791, in Baltimore, he "went from house to house, through the snow and cold, begging money for the support of the poor orphans at Cokesbury." In a season of unwonted hopefulness he wrote to his colleague: "If it were not for the suspicions of some, and the pride and ignorance of others, I am of the opinion I could make provision by collections, profits on books, and donations in land to take two thousand children under the best plan of education ever known in this country. The Lord begins to smile on our Kingswood School (Cokesbury). One promising young man has gone forth into the ministry, another is ready, and several have been under awakenings. None so healthy and orderly as our children, and some promise great talents for learning. The obstinate and ignorant oppose, among preachers and people; while the judicious, for good sense and piety in Church and State, admire and applaud."

The subsequent history of Cokesbury College, which in point of time belongs to a later period, may properly be given here. After severe financial trials, which in 1794 compelled it to seek incorporation, by which its management passed from the Conference to a board of trustees, its end came suddenly. The building took fire on December 7, 1795, and was burned to the ground. The bitter news was a month in reaching Asbury. "Its enemies may rejoice," he wrote in the first smart of his disappointment, "and its friends need not mourn. Would any man give me £10,000 per year to do and suffer again what I have done for that house I would not do it. The Lord called not Mr. Whitefield nor the Methodists to build colleges. I wished only for schools—Dr. Coke wanted a college. I feel distressed at the loss of the library."

The destruction of the college at Abingdon was followed by the opening of "a second Cokesbury" in Baltimore in a brick building adjoining the Light Street Church lot, the Methodists of Baltimore having raised a large fund for the new enterprise. This met with great success for all too brief a period. Pupils of both sexes were admitted, and the scheme for the instruction of girls was remarkably lib-



W. BY P. E. FLINTOFF

FROM A SKETCH BY SHORT.

EBENEZER ACADEMY, BRUNSWICK COUNTY, VA.

This building stands on the highway from Petersburg to Boydton.

eral. On December 4, 1796, this building also caught fire and was burned, with the neighboring church. "I conclude God loveth the people of Baltimore," wrote Asbury after this second adverse stroke, "and will keep them poor in order to keep them pure."

Cokesbury College never rose from its ruins, and it was many years before the Methodists attempted to found another seat of learning upon so ambitious a scale. The sacrifices which bishop, preachers, and people had made for it were extraordinary, and it doubtless seemed to many, as it

did to Asbury in the first bitterness of defeat, that the Lord had not called this people to plant colleges.

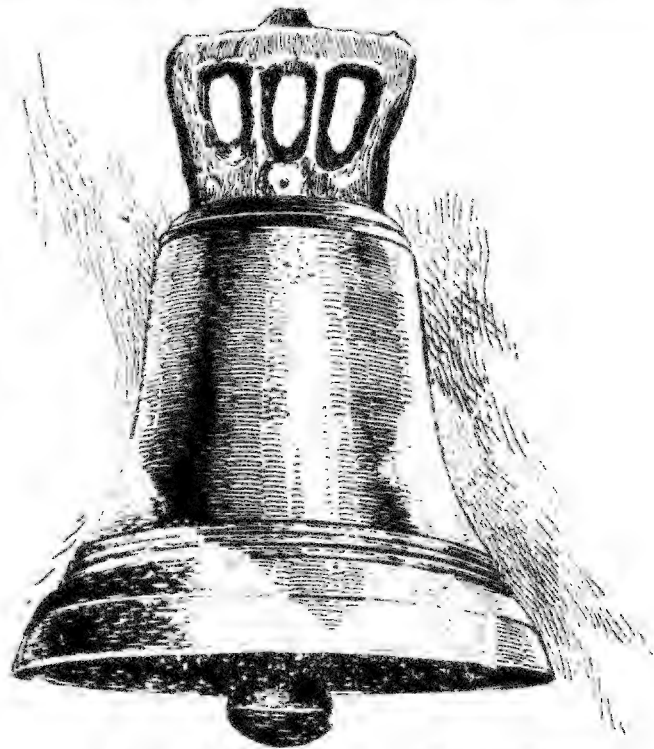
Other schools and academies which began about this time under Methodist auspices—Ebenezer Academy, in Brunswick County, Va., Bethel Academy, in Kentucky, and Cokesbury School, on the Yadkin, in Surry County, N. C.—are mentioned in the early records, but the cost of maintaining them and the indifference of the people to the benefits of education limited their success.

The records of Cokesbury College at Abingdon perished in the flames, and no catalogue of its students is known. Some men who studied there took high rank in after

life, among them the Hon. Samuel White, a senator of the United States; Asbury Dickins, secretary of the United States Senate, and that powerful Methodist preacher, Rev. Valentine Cook.

It is safe to say that, had its property been spared, the college would have exerted a marked influence upon the condition of the denomination and of the Middle States.

The grass-grown ruin at Abingdon is a monument to the high ideals and painful sacrifices of the fathers. No one can view the site without a pang of sympathy for the hearts that ached over its failure. Yet out of that sorrowful experience



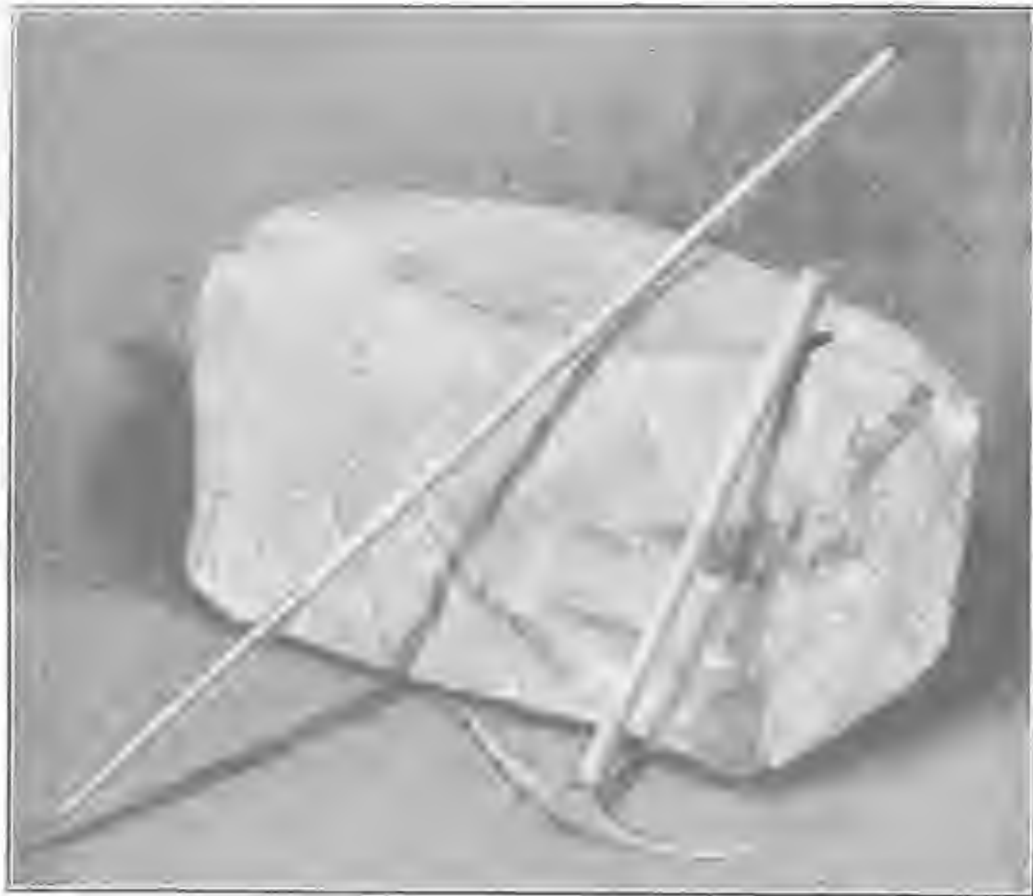
DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE COKEsbURY BELL.

Now in the Woman's College, Baltimore, Md.

has come the rich accomplishment of our own time, when American Methodism rejoices in its many colleges and is one of the most powerful forces for education in the nation. The old bell rescued from the hopeless ash heaps of Cokesbury has found a home in the Woman's College in Baltimore, and

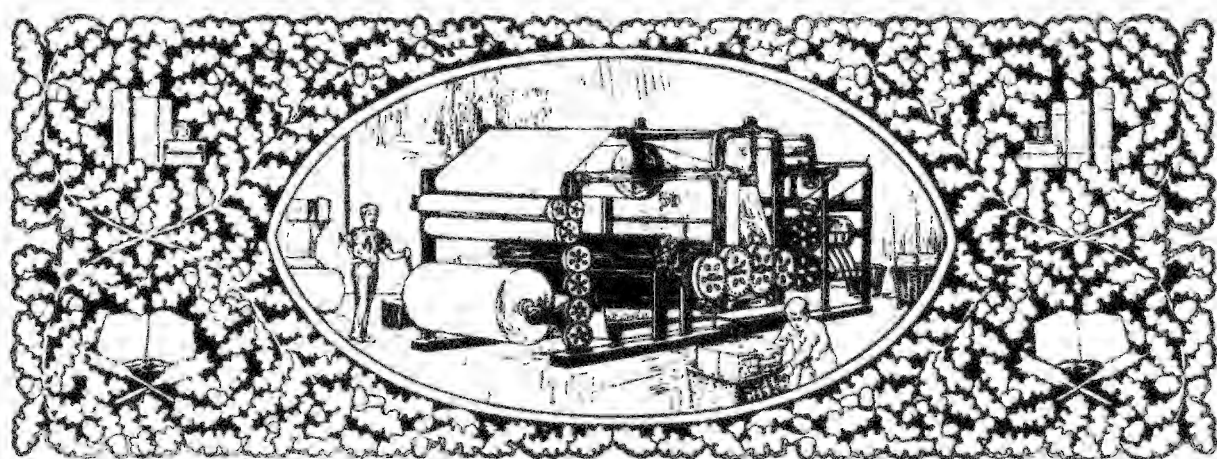


FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE COKESBURY STONE.

This stone, taken from the ruins of Cokesbury College, was built into the foundation of the American University, Washington, D. C.

a fire-scarred stone from the ruin at Abingdon is destined to be the head of the corner of that college of the American University, in Washington, which perpetuates in our educational system the name of Francis Asbury.



CHAPTER XL

Cheap Books for the People

CONSECRATED PRINTER'S INK.—ROBERT WILLIAMS'S PAMPHLETS.—
RANKIN'S RULES.—JOHN DICKINS.—EZEKIEL COOPER.—A USEFUL
INSTITUTION.

JOHN WESLEY ordained the printing press to be a preacher of Methodism. He has told how he came to be the founder of a publishing house: "In 1738, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny apiece, and afterward several longer. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and by this means, un-awares, I became rich." By this means also it came to pass that the British Methodists became not only a praying and a singing people, but to a remarkable degree a reading people. These cheap books and tracts ran ahead of the traveling preachers and often prepared the way for them. So useful and profitable had the printing of books, small and large, proved in England, that it is not surprising to learn that the first Wesleyan missionary who came to this country availed himself of the same means of spreading the doctrines.

This was Robert Williams, who disembarked at Norfolk, Va., in the fall of 1769, and, hymn book in hand, began to

sing and pray in the presence of a curious throng on the main street of that town. Boardman and Pilmoor, who came shortly after, brought a box of Wesleyan books with them, many of which were sold in New York, but Williams, who came penniless, was soon publishing on his own account. He reprinted Wesley's most effective sermons, putting them up in cheap pamphlets, and selling them wherever he went. Philip Gatch confessed his spiritual debt to Wesley's sermon on Salvation by Faith, one of the tracts which fell into his hands as early as 1772. The Rev. Devereux Jarratt, that powerful clerical ally, gained confidence in the Methodists through "some of their books furnished by Mr. Williams." Jesse Lee says the small pamphlets which he circulated among the people "had a very good effect, and gave the people great light and understanding in the nature of the new birth and in the plan of salvation; and withal they opened the way in many places for our preachers to be invited to preach where they had never been before."

There can be little doubt that Rankin's instructions touched upon this subject, for the Conference of 1773, at which he presided as Wesley's representative, gave special attention to publishing. It enacted two rules already alluded to:

"4. None of the preachers in America to reprint any of Mr. Wesley's books without his authority (where it can be got) and the consent of their brethren.

"5. Robert Williams to sell the books he has already printed, but to print no more unless under the above restriction."

This was a step toward a Methodist press in America. Meanwhile the duty of the preacher as colporteur was not forgotten. The Methodist Episcopal Church, in the first edition of its Discipline, enjoined upon the preacher in charge

of each circuit "care that every society be duly supplied with books, particularly with à Kempis, Instructions to Children, and Primitive Physic, which ought to be in every home." "Be active," so ran the exhortation to the preachers; "be active in dispersing Mr Wesley's books. Every assistant may beg money of the rich to buy books for the poor."

In 1787 the book business came up again for notice in the Discipline. It was agreed that the Conference should be consulted respecting any publication of books, and that the profits should be "applied, according to the discretion of the Conference, toward the college, the preachers' fund, the deficiencies of the preachers, the distant missions, or the debts on our churches." "From this time," says Lee, "we began to publish more of our own books than ever before, and the principal part of the printing business was carried on in New York."

The famous New York Conference of May, 1789, not only voted the historic address to President Washington, made plans for missions among the Indians, and commissioned Jesse Lee to invade "the enemy's country" of New England, but it has the honor of proposing the plan for the establishment of the "Methodist Book Concern," a name which first appears in the Conference Minutes of 1792.

Coke wrote of its action: "We have now settled our printing business, I trust, on an advantageous footing both for the people individually and for the connection at large, as it is fixed on a secure basis and on a very enlarged scale. The people will thereby be amply supplied with books of pure divinity for their reading, which is of the next importance to preaching; and the profits of the books are to be applied partly to finish and pay off the debt of our college and partly to establish missions and schools among the

Indians." The Rev John Dickins, to whom the Conference of 1789 confided the stewardship of the book business,

John Dickins

was eminently adapted for this work. Both wise and learned, no better selection could have been made.

Coming to America before the Revolution, he united with the Methodists, and in 1777 was taken on trial as a preacher. His work lay chiefly in North Carolina and Virginia until the British evacuation of New York, when he was selected for the responsible task of reviving the old John Street society, which, after long isolation, had lost its most substantial members in the Loyalist exodus. He was a married man, and for the first time the preacher's house in New York rejoiced in a gentle mistress, and the voices of children were mingled in the hymns which were sung around the family altar. Dickins was reappointed to New York every year but one until 1789, the society multiplying in numbers and grace during his protracted term of service.

The Conference of 1789 appointed him preacher in charge at Philadelphia as well as book steward. He was editor, proof reader, business manager, bookkeeper, salesman, and shipping clerk of the infant publishing house, and he is said to have loaned it the \$600 which formed the original business capital. The accounts of the Concern were opened in Philadelphia on August 17, 1789. The first book issued was a reprint of *The Christian's Pattern*, Wesley's abridgement of Thomas à Kempis, one of the first Methodist books issued in England, and one which is still found in the catalogue of the American house. Other early Philadelphia imprints of 1789 and 1790 are two volumes of an American reissue of the *Arminian Magazine*, *A Form*

of Discipline, the hymn book, Baxter's Saint's Rest, and that most curious of Wesley's compilations, Primitive Physic.

In 1790 Dickins was relieved of pastoral work that he might give his whole time to his duties as "superintendent of the printing and book business." The principle upon which the itinerants received no salary except a bare support was applied strictly to his case. The sum of \$666⅓ was granted to him, according to the Discipline of 1792, to be apportioned as follows: "(1) \$200 for a dwelling house and for a book room; (2) \$80 for a boy; (3) \$53⅓ for firewood, and (4)

\$333 to clothe and feed himself, his wife, and his children.'

The powers of the book agent at this time were defined:



PHOTOGRAPHED FROM AN ORIGINAL IN THE LIBRARY OF OREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST BOOK ISSUED BY THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN.

“ 1. To regulate the publications according to the state of the finances.

“ 2. To determine, with the approbation of the Book Committee, on the amount of the drafts which may be drawn from time to time on the book fund.

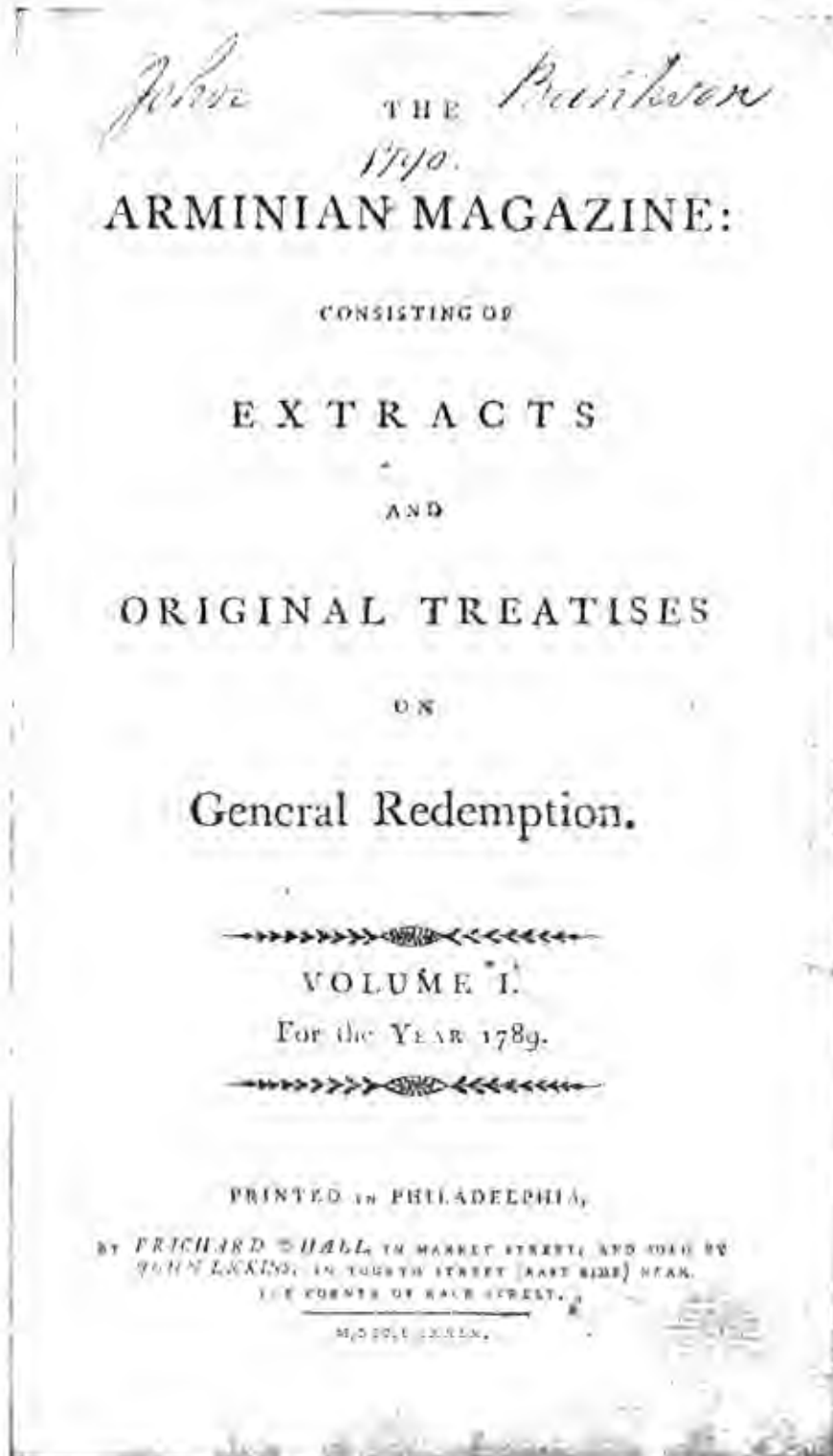
“ 3. To complain to the District Conferences if any preachers shall neglect to make due payment for books.

“ 4. To publish from time to time such books or treatises as he and the other members of the Book Committee shall unanimously judge proper.”

This first Book Committee on record, that of 1792, consisted of Dickins, Henry Willis, and Thomas Haskins, with the Philadelphia preacher *ex officio*. The General Conference of this year felt justified in granting out of the prospective profits of the book business \$800 to Cokesbury College for the next year, and \$1,066 $\frac{2}{3}$ annually for the rest of the quadrennium; the money to be used, first, for the support of the charity boys, the balance, if any, to pay the debt or finish the building. The annual dividend for the worn-out preachers was fixed at \$266 $\frac{1}{3}$. The bishop was authorized to draw \$64 annually for the benefit of the Conference academies. Any surplus over these payments and that of \$866 to Dickins was to be added to the capital. The annual profits then doubtless exceeded \$2,500—not a poor return for the original investment of \$600.

While Dickins superintended the business of the office Philip Cox was left without an appointment that he might travel through the connection in the interest of the circulation of the books and the collection of the accounts; an important work when the wide dispersion of the preachers and the difficulties in the way of travel, transportation, and trade are considered. At his death the Minutes of 1794 thus recognize

his services: "Philip Cox, a native of Britain, who was born at Froome, Somersetshire. He joined in our society about



PHOTOGRAVED FROM AN ORIGINAL IN THE METHODIST LIBRARY, NEW YORK

TITLE-PAGE OF THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE.

eighteen years ago, and had been in the ministry about sixteen years, during which time he traveled extensively through

several of the United States. He was a man of small stature, great spirit, quick apprehension, sound judgment, a lover of union, and often prayed and preached to the admiration of many, and in various parts with considerable success. His

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

WE are not ignorant that the Gospel has been preached in the eastern and northern parts of these United States, from the earliest settlement of the country; but this has been done chiefly, though not entirely, through the Calvinistic medium: the consequence of which has been, that the religious books in general which have been circulated in those parts, and in some measure through the southern states, have more or less maintained the doctrines of unconditional election and reprobation—that “GOD is” not “loving to every man,” and that “his mercy is” not “over all his works;” and consequently, that “Christ did” not “die for all,” but only for a small select number of mankind: by the means of which opinions; Antinomianism has insensibly gained ground, and the great duties of self-denial, mortification, crucifixion to the world, and all the other severe but essentially-necessary duties of religion, have been too much neglected and despised.

FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE PREFACE TO THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE, 1789.

Signed by Bishops Coke and Asbury, dated North Carolina, April 10, 1789.

last services were great in circulating so many hundred books of religious instruction.” Returning in the early autumn from “a visit to the westward”—an expression which at that time stood for exposure, privation, and irregular diet in the wilderness beyond the mountains—he was taken mortally ill, and died a week later.

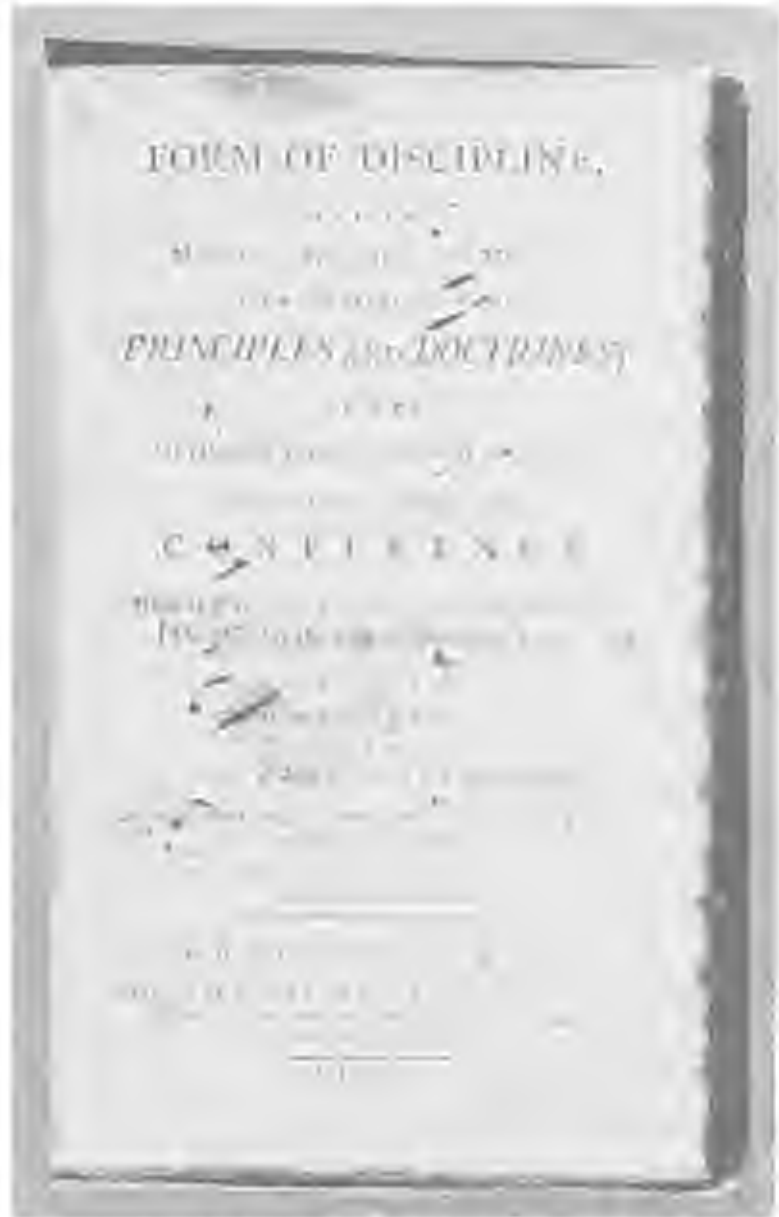
As long as Dickins lived the Church owned no printing office. The books of 1790 and 1791 were printed for the Conference by R. Aitken & Son and J. Cruikshank, of Philadelphia, the Book Room being then at 43 Fourth Street. In

1792 the house was at No. 182 Race Street, and Parry Hall was the printer. From 1795 to 1798 the Book Room was at 50 North Second Street, and Henry Tuckniss did the printing. In the latter year the Book Room was at 41 Market Street, between Front and Second Streets.

Dickins gave the last nine years of his life to the special work to which he was called in 1789. During these years one hundred and fourteen thousand volumes of books went out from the Methodist Book Room at Philadelphia. These comprised Wesley's and Fletcher's works, already the classics of Methodism; hymnals, Disciplines, Christian bi-

ographies, devotional books, and controversial pamphlets, at least one of which, *Friendly Remarks on the Late Proceedings of the Rev. Mr. Hammet*, was written by Dickins himself and printed by request of the Conference.

This first agent of the Book Concern died at his post. A



PHOTOGRAPHED FROM AN ORIGINAL IN THE LIBRARY OF DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AN EARLY BOOK CONCERN IMPRINT.

pest of yellow fever was ravaging the city, and men and women were fleeing before it. But not so with the Methodist book steward. To Asbury he wrote: "I sit down to write as in the jaws of death. Whether Providence may permit me to see your face again in the flesh I know not. Perhaps I might have left the city, as most of my friends and brethren have done. I commit myself and family into the hands of God for life or death." His last words when smitten down by the fever were to his wife: "Glory be to Jesus! O, glory be to my God! I have not felt so much for seven years. Love him, trust him, praise him!" He died on September 26, 1798. He was buried in St. George's Churchyard, where a tablet still bears his name. But his best memorial is the great and beneficent publishing Concern with whose beginnings his name will ever be gratefully associated.

Dickins was a notable figure among the brethren, and no man's loss, save one, could have been more deeply felt. He was powerful in the pulpit—"the thundering Methodist" they called him in New York. Asbury noted his piety, his prayerfulness, and his zeal for the Christian education of his children—a consideration which doubtless accounts for the intensity of his interest in the project for a college. The Minutes say of him, "According to his time and opportunity he was one of the greatest characters that ever graced the pulpit or adorned the society of the Methodists."

The chairman of the publishing committee of the Conference at the time of John Dickins's death was Ezekiel Cooper, then presiding elder of Wilmington District. The news shocked him, and he was "doubtful whether we shall be able to supply his place with one so well qualified." To him Asbury wrote at once: "My very dear brother, what I have

greatly feared for years has now taken place. Dickins, the generous, the just, the faithful Dickins, is dead! It is to you, you only, I can look to assist Asbury Dickins to conduct the work as heretofore. You will correct the press? You will superintend the state and entries of the various accounts, that the connection and the family suffer no material injury? The Magazine must be continued, five or ten thousand hymn books will be wanting immediately. You will now have it in your power to render the connection such extensive service as your heart, I hope, desires.'

Cooper found the business embarrassed by debt to the Dickins estate, and the collections badly

in arrears, and it was only after repeated exhortations from Asbury and the brethren that he submitted, in 1799, and took up "his cross," for one year at a time. He at once prepared an address "to the preachers and friends" of the Church,



PHOTOGRAPHED FROM AN ORIGINAL IN THE LIBRARY OF DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

ONE OF DICKINS'S WORKS.

setting forth the aims of the Book Concern, its financial embarrassments, and the clear duty of the Church. While he found the business in debt to the Dickins estate for money advanced, there was not a dollar of cash with which to pay. Large sums were due, however, and the new agent pleaded most earnestly with the brethren for diligence in collections and punctuality in remittances. "The business," he says, "may answer a noble purpose to the connection, provided that the brethren are spirited and industrious in promoting of it."

Cooper infused new energy and introduced new methods. Dollars and cents took the place of sterling money in his accounts. The employment of traveling book stewards was abandoned, and the book agent himself inaugurated the now time-honored plan of visiting the Annual Conferences. His hand is traceable in the disciplinary changes of 1800. He was to have great liberty in the conduct of the business, the Conference committee retaining only the selection of manuscripts and the auditing of accounts. Each presiding elder was charged with supplying his district with books, and was made answerable to the bishop for the correctness of his accounts. The preachers in turn must diligently circulate the books among the people. Improved methods of collection were introduced, and all drafts on the Concern were forbidden until the business should be more firmly established, after which the profits, instead of being scattered among many charities, were "to be regularly paid to the chartered fund and be applied to the support of the distressed traveling preachers and their families." And four years later, when John Wilson was appointed junior agent, it was further enacted that the general book steward should "every year send forward to each Annual Conference an account of the

dividend which the several Annual Conferences may draw in that year."

A local church trouble, in which Cooper became involved,



FROM A COPPERPLATE ENGRAVING.

REV. EZEKIEL COOPER.

The second founder of the Book Concern, 1799-1808.

led the Philadelphia Conference to declare in 1803 for the removal of the book business to Baltimore. But the General

Conference of 1804 settled the matter by locating the office in New York city, where it has ever since remained. In New York Cooper and his assistants were for a few years regularly stationed preachers, but since 1808 all agents have been left free from pastoral cares. In that year the limit of official tenure was fixed at eight years, but since 1836 the agents have been elected quadrennially.

The earliest home of the Book Room in New York was probably in Gold Street. The city Directory for 1805 gives the "Methodist Book Store" at 249 Pearl Street. Three years later it was in a plain two-story dwelling house in Church Street, near White. The Rev Daniel Devinne, the father of the eminent printer, has described a visit which he made to the Methodist Book Concern of that day. A few blows of the brass knocker aroused "a very lordly looking gentleman. He was dressed in short breeches, white stockings, white vest, black coat, and his hair was combed very artistically. Without saying a word he came down the stairs, passed into another room, where the books were piled upon the floor, and handed me one book. I gave him a silver dollar, and he gave me six cents change. I tried to make small talk, but it would not run."

Ezekiel Cooper, who gave up the agency in 1808, was the second founder of the Book Concern. When elected to the post in 1799 he was only thirty-six years of age, but had already developed unusual talents. He was born in Caroline County, Md., and could never forget that at the age of thirteen he first heard Methodist preaching from the lips of Freeborn Garrettson on a muster day. Converted, with a rich experience, before he was twenty, he was found to be endued with the requisite grace and gifts to be a circuit preacher before his twenty-second birthday. His eloquence and

energy, tempered with foresight, won him early promotion, and at thirty he was presiding elder on the important Boston District. Soon afterward he was chairman of the supervisory committee of the Book Concern, from which position he entered upon that in which his friend Dickins had fallen. After eight years of most efficient service, in which the publishing capital was increased to nearly \$50,000, the business greatly extended, and its methods improved, he reentered the itinerancy. His closing years were spent in Philadelphia, where he died on the eve of his eighty-fifth birthday, February 21, 1847, leaving an honorable name throughout the Church for piety, sagacity, and eloquence. A marble slab on the front of St. George's Church records his name and virtues.

The Book Concern continued to flourish for a generation upon the original plans of Dickins and Cooper. Wilson died in 1810, and the Rev D. Hitt conducted the business alone until 1812, and later with the assistance of the Rev. Thomas Ware. In 1816 they were succeeded by the Rev. Joshua Soule and Thomas Mason, their store being at 41 John Street. These changes bring the history of the Methodist book business down to 1820, when the election of the Rev Nathan Bangs to the senior agency and the establishment of a branch in Cincinnati in charge of a junior agent, "to manage the Concern in the Western country," marked a new epoch in its development.

The benefits which have accrued not only to the Methodist Episcopal Church, but to the American people, from the Methodist Book Concern are beyond calculation. For more than a century its presses have supplied the Church with a rich denominational literature, not to speak of works of general religious and theological character. Vast sums of money have been paid out as dividends to the Annual Conferences

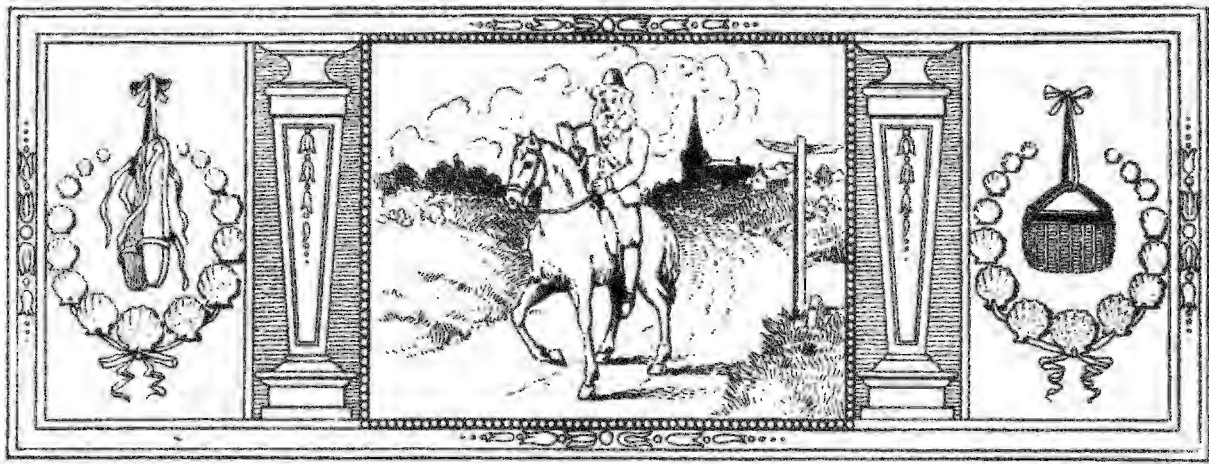
for distribution among the worn-out veterans of the Conferences and the widows and children of preachers. The management of its weighty interests through a series of distressful conflagrations and paralyzing financial panics has proven the fidelity and sagacity of the chosen agents of the Church.

But its best service lies beyond all these considerations. The Methodist press was established at a critical juncture in the religious history of America. Infidel France being the closest political friend of the young republic, the fascinating literature of the French deists and atheists was everywhere read and admired. Thomas Paine's blasphemous pamphlets were circulated with unholy zeal and baneful effect. Earnest Christians of other sects perceived the danger and bewailed it. The Methodists contributed largely to arrest this skeptical influence.

In the Discipline of 1796 the bishops raised the warning cry and roused the traveling preachers to action. "Next to the preaching of the Gospel," they declared, "the spreading of religious knowledge by the press is of the greatest moment to the people. The books of infidelity and profaneness with which the States at present abound demand our strongest exertions to counteract their pernicious influence; and every step shall be taken which is consistent with our finances to furnish our friends from time to time with the most useful treatises on every branch of religious knowledge."

The Methodist books were small, inexpensive, singularly free from the ponderous terms of theology, and holding out a hopeful system of religion to the people. The itinerancy supplied a corps of unselfish agents, continually traveling through all sections of the country and giving gratuitous and effective advertisement to the books with which their saddlebags were stocked. The masterly reasoning of Wesley and

the fervid appeals of Fletcher influenced men who would not have been seen in a Methodist meeting. Let it not be forgotten that in the general Christian effort to build up a vast practical religious literature in this country the Methodist Book Concern contributed a large share toward the magnificent result, and that the plans devised by Dickins and Cooper rank, though in a different way, with those of Benjamin Franklin and Isaiah Thomas as supplying books for the unlimited field which was opening before the new republic.



CHAPTER XLI

The Apostle of New England

BOYHOOD OF JESSE LEE.—CHRIST IN THE HOUSEHOLD.—AN UNWILLING SOLDIER.—EARLY ITINERANT SERVICE.—A CALL TO NEW ENGLAND.—BISHOP'S ASSISTANT.—LATER LABORS AND TRAVELS.

THE apostle of Methodism in New England bore the name of one of the first families of his native Virginia. Jesse, the second son of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Lee, was born on his father's plantation, in Prince George County, March 12, 1758. His parents were respectable Church of England folk, who went regularly to church and lived moral lives without much thought of the religion of the heart. Schools did not flourish in the Old Dominion, but John and Jesse Lee had such education as the neighborhood provided. Jesse learned the Catechism out of the Book of Common Prayer, and in a local singing school his mellow voice received some training for the effective service for which he was unconsciously preparing.

Except for an occasional "indulgence in bad tempers" and the "use of some vain words" Jesse Lee's boyhood seems to have been upright and moral. When his natural gayety might have led him astray his attention was called to his soul's needs by the conversion of his father under the

preaching of a wandering Methodist. His mother passed through the same joyous experience, and religion became the chief interest of the Lee household. For Jesse it was a hard struggle, but in 1774, in his seventeenth year, he came out into the light and joined a Methodist society.

The preachers on Brunswick Circuit made his father's house a preaching place, and the young man was brought much under their influence. In the sweeping tides of the great revival in Virginia he "discovered that the blood of Christ could indeed cleanse from all sin."

Though naturally diffident, he now began to tell of his spiritual blessings, and in 1778, when he removed across the border into Carolina, he began to lead a class and exhort publicly, often with tears streaming down his manly cheeks, "for my heart yearned over the souls of poor sinners." All his spare time he devoted to "reading or going to meeting," and at the age of twenty-one he took a text—1 John iii, 12—and preached his first sermon, praying God to pardon his imperfections.

It was John Dickins, whose name is linked with everything progressive in our early history, who recognized the talent wrapped in the young Virginian's diffidence and took him out on the circuit.

In July, 1780, Lee was drafted into the Continental service. "As a Christian and a preacher of the Gospel" he "could not fight," nay, would not even shoulder the musket that was thrust into his hands, though he stoutly asserted his patriotism. His colonel put him under arrest at first, but being convinced of his conscientious scruples, he soon released him, and assigned him to duty as a noncombatant.

Lee's success as a camp preacher seemed to be a fresh call into the itinerancy, yet he hesitated, "fearing that I should

injure the work of God, which I loved as I did my own life." He sought to test the Lord's will by marrying, praying "that if it was the will of God that I should ever be called to the itinerant field, I might not succeed in changing my state." He became a chief among the apostles, and died a bachelor.

However reluctant to join the preachers, he could not keep away from them. In 1782 he was permitted to sit in the Conference room at Ellis's Chapel, Sussex County, Va., and witness the fraternal spirit there exhibited. "The union and brotherly love which I saw among the preachers," he wrote, "exceeded everything I had ever seen before, and caused me to wish that I was worthy to have a place among them. When they took leave of each other they embraced and wept as though they never expected to meet again." At the close of the session Asbury sought out Lee and asked him to take a circuit. But the young man protested his insufficiency. Asbury, however, called out to some of the preachers, "I am going to enlist Brother Lee."

"What bounty do you offer?" answered one, taking up the pleasantry

"Grace here and glory hereafter, if he is faithful," said the leader; and Lee treasured the words in his memory, though for six months more he shrank from taking the decisive step.

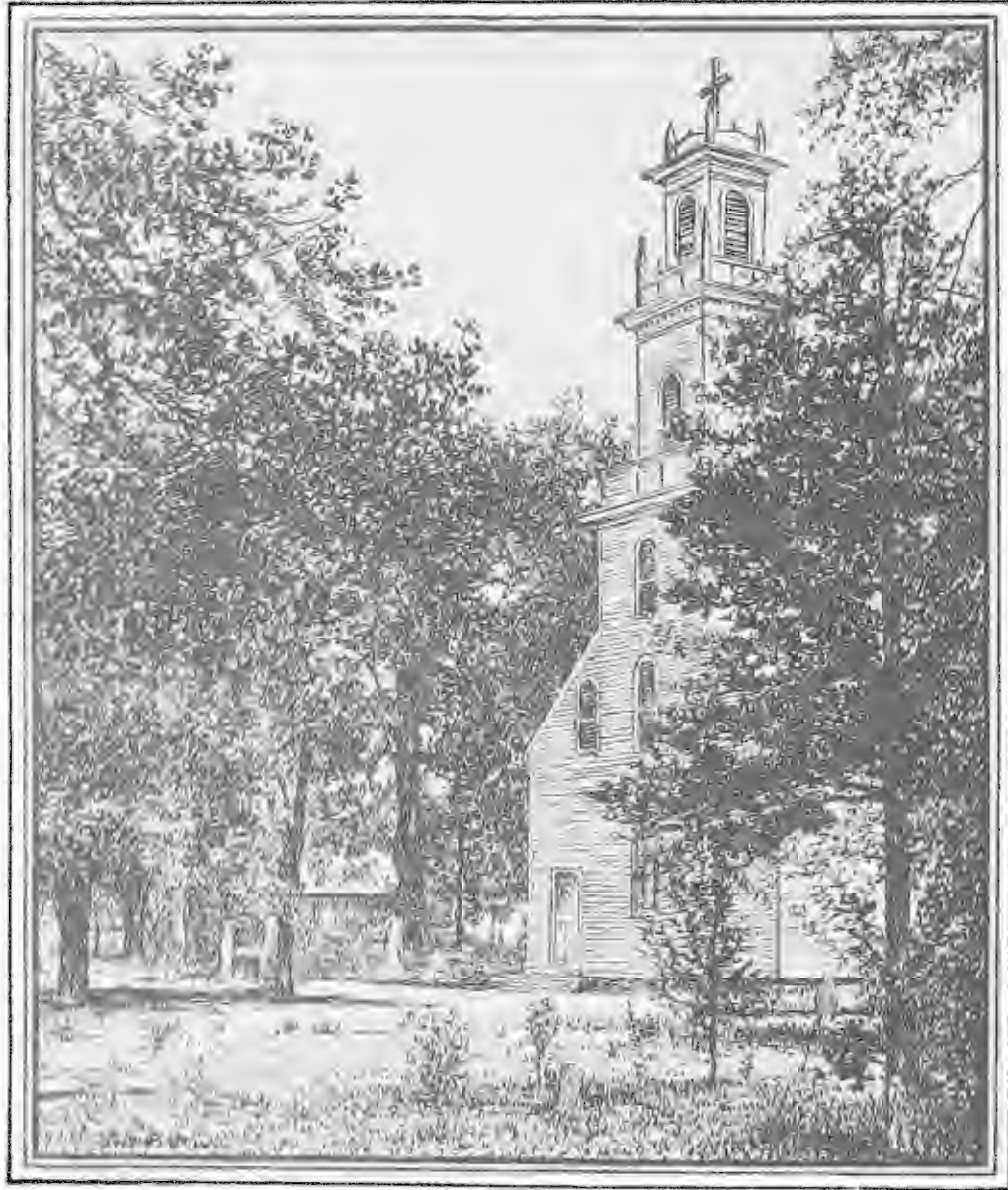
When the Conference met again at Ellis's, in May, 1783, Jesse Lee put his hand to the plow. His first appointment was to Caswell Circuit, in North Carolina, and the first sermon of his itinerant career was delivered "at Widow Parker's to a few people, most of whom were called out of the harvest field." Their inattention was not so discouraging as his experience of the next day with certain disorderly members. He was inclined to return to his father's house, but happily

concluded to persevere. He rapidly developed superior power in the pulpit. His emotions were easily stirred, and his tears mingled with those of his hearers. In more than one place where he "preached with liberty the Spirit of the Lord came upon us and we were bathed in tears—so loud were the people's cries that I could scarcely be heard, though I spoke very loud." His Journal is punctuated with such notes as "many tears," "very happy," "my soul all on fire of love," "I found that love had tears as well as grief."

The theater of Lee's earlier labors was Virginia and North Carolina. In the latter State he nearly perished while fording the flooded Yadkin, his horse having lost its footing. Here, too, on December 12, 1784, he received his summons to the Christmas Conference, but Baltimore was five hundred miles distant, his health was feeble, and the weather and roads so bad that he did not venture on the journey. A month later he met his newly elected bishop. To his surprise and dismay Asbury was arrayed for preaching in black gown, cassock, and bands—strange attire for plain and simple Methodists. Lee accompanied the superintendent and Henry Willis as far south as Charleston. It was while on this journey, at a place called Cheraw, that one of those providential dispensations which only a pagan would call chance turned Lee's attention to the field which was to make him famous.

The three preachers were kindly entertained by a merchant of the place, and Lee with his natural good fellowship made friends with the clerk of their host. The young man was from Massachusetts, and in response to Lee's inquiries concerning the religion of his native State he gave such a lively description of the grim theology of the New England churches and the spiritual deadness of ministers and people

that it flashed through the mind of the Methodist that here waited a work ready for his hand. Five years elapsed before the desire of his heart was granted; but he kept it before the bishop, before his fellow-preachers, and, we cannot doubt,



DRAWN BY J. E. DAVIS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

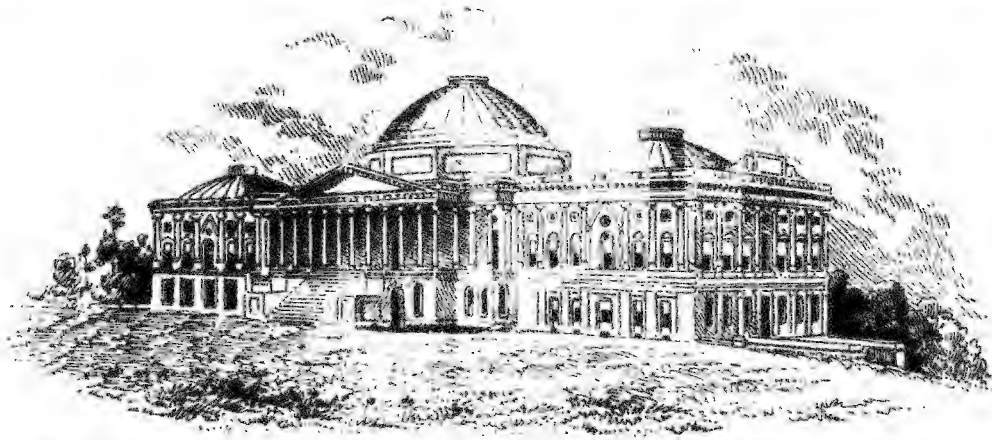
OLD ST. DAVID'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, CHERAW, S. C.

Where Jesse Lee's attention was called to the spiritual dearth of New England.

before the Lord in prayer until it was accomplished. Meanwhile he rendered effective service in the Carolinas and Maryland.

In 1789 his prayer was granted and he was appointed to

Stamford, Conn. For the next eight years he gave himself wholly to the establishing of Methodism in the New England States. Asbury's personal appeal for assistance recalled him southward in the fall of 1797. With the bishop, whose health was feeble, he traversed the vast territory of the Church for several years from Maine to Georgia. At the General Conference of 1800 he fell but one vote short of



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

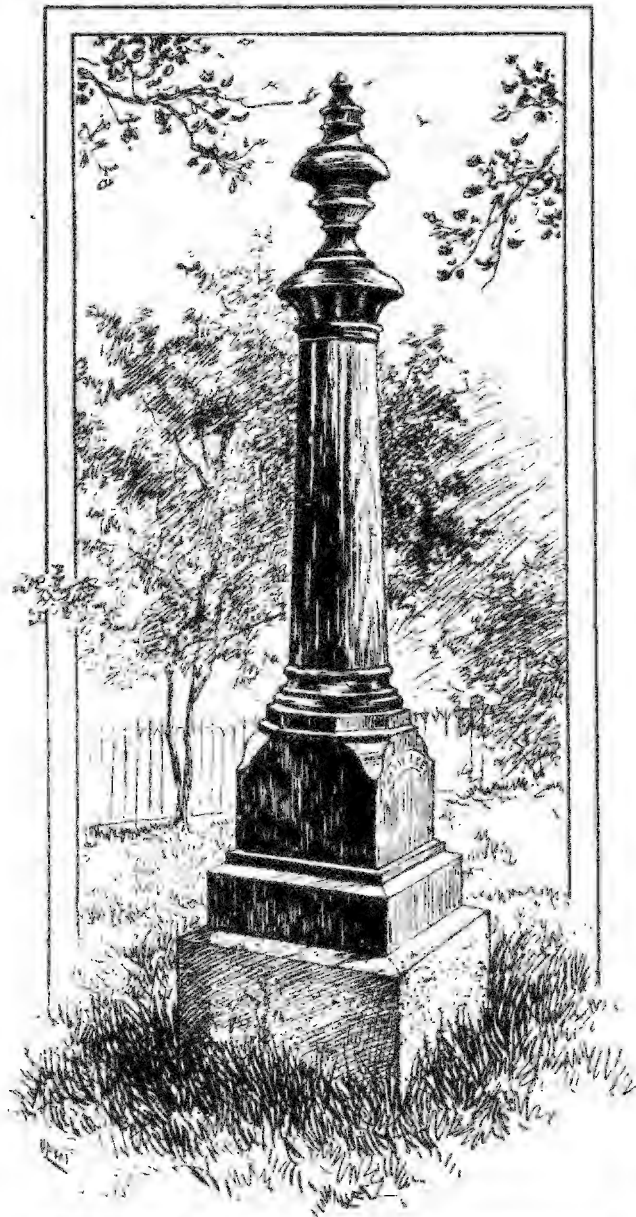
FROM A COPPERPLATE ENGRAVING.

THE OLD CAPITOL, WASHINGTON.

Here the Senate and House met when Jesse Lee was their chaplain, 1800-1814.

election as bishop. The choice went to Whatecoat. Most of the next six years he spent in Virginia as presiding elder and circuit preacher, being engaged also in writing a memoir of his brother, the Rev. John Lee, which was published about the end of 1805. In 1807 he traveled at large in the South, especially in Georgia, where he was received with the cordiality which his intellectual and social gifts merited. The next year, after a quarter's service in his native State, he made a farewell visit to New England, being welcomed as a spiritual father by thousands of Methodists. No American preacher was so well known throughout the East as this noble Virginian, whose cordial manner and ready wit everywhere won him the friendship of those with whom he came in contact.

In May, 1809, he was elected chaplain of the United States House of Representatives, and in December of the same year his *Short History of the Methodists in the United States of*



DRAWN BY W. B. DAVIS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

MONUMENT TO JESSE LEE.

In the church lot, Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Baltimore, Md.

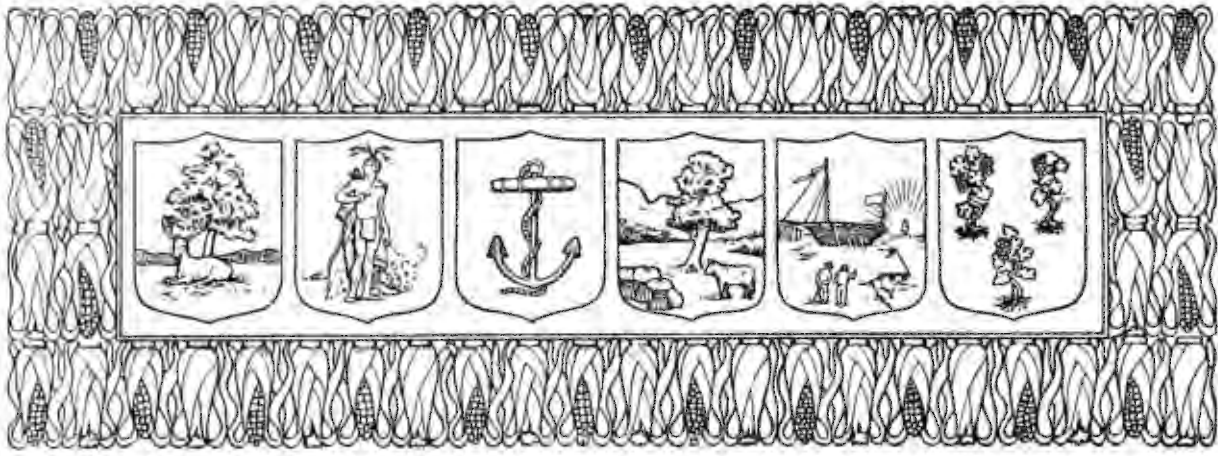
America was put to press. It was the first work of its kind, and for many years stood alone. The extent and accuracy of the author's information have made the book to this day one of the principal authorities of the student of history. After successive reelections to the chaplaincy of the House he was, in 1814, chosen chaplain of the Senate, still maintaining his relations with the Conference and being regularly appointed to a circuit. But his course was well-nigh run. Though not yet sixty years of age, he was worn by labors and hardships and harassed by disease. He attended his last Conference, in Baltimore, in

March, 1816, and was stationed at Annapolis. Two months later he walked as mourner behind the remains of his great captain, Asbury.

The twelfth of September, 1816, was the last earthly day of Jesse Lee. Late in August he had been stricken with

a mortal illness while preaching at a camp ground near Hillsborough, Md. For two weeks the fever ravaged those splendid vital energies which had been so devotedly used in the service of his Master. On the day before the end he cried out, "Glory, glory, glory! hallelujah! Jesus reigns!" In the evening he spoke calmly for some minutes, sending last messages to absent friends, and bidding farewell to the tearful company at his bedside. The next night his spirit passed without sigh or groan.

Jesse Lee's services to the Church were of the highest order. Though he failed of an election to the general superintendency, no one except the bishops traveled more widely than he, and no laborer ever made such solid conquests as he was enabled to achieve in New England. The simplicity and integrity of his character, the fixity of his faith, the fervor of his appeals, coupled with a social faculty which gained him popularity in the cabins of the Carolinas, among the shrewd citizens of the North, and in the halls of the national Congress—these were qualities which made Jesse Lee such a mighty apostle of Methodism.



CHAPTER XLII

Free Grace among the Elect

A YANKEE ABROAD. — THE NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES. — LEE SENT TO STAMFORD. — THE FIRST SERMON. — OPPOSITION. — THE FIRST CLASSES. — PREACHING "PRINCIPLES." — REINFORCEMENTS.

JESSE LEE'S yearning to preach the Gospel of a free salvation to the people of New England dated from February, 1785, when, at Cheraw, in South Carolina, the clerk from "down East" amazed the young itinerant with his account of the cold and unsatisfying nature of what passed for religion in that remote region.

The New England States at that time formed a community of nearly one million souls. The people were, with rare exceptions, of pure English stock, descended from the Puritan immigrants of the seventeenth century. In thrift, in a more general education, and in at least the externals of religion they surpassed their countrymen of the Middle States and the South. The ancient union of Church and State, though somewhat impaired, still existed, and the Congregational churches were supported by taxes laid upon the property holders of the parishes, just as highways and bridges were maintained.

The pastor, usually a graduate of Harvard or Yale, was

often a man of learning, and was the object of high respect and reverence. Long pastorates were the rule, and not seldom the son followed the father in the pulpit and in the esteem of the people. Yet, with their high morals and profound erudition, the "orthodox" ministers of New England were singularly ignorant of that religion of the heart of which the humblest Methodist itinerant possessed full assurance. Instead of calling upon their hearers to repent of their sins and lead a new life they delivered sermons full of metaphysical argument on obscure points of doctrine, addressed solely to the intellect. In the villages the Sunday morning sermon was "the one event of the week. There were no concerts, no lectures, no plays, and indeed no Sunday newspapers, to draw away the thoughts of men from religion." Those who attended listened closely and even took notes, and in the absence of news the subtle points of the sermon were topics of discussion throughout the community

The doctrines preached from the New England pulpits of that day were Calvinistic. God was the dread Sovereign of the universe; his just and immutable decrees had ordained all things from the beginning; in his wisdom he had chosen a portion of mankind for salvation, and all except these must perish in eternal torments. These and kindred tenets made up the hard and hopeless creed of orthodoxy. Before 1789 several other sects had gained a footing beside the ancient Churches. Baptist societies were spreading rapidly from Roger Williams's colony of Rhode Island. In New Hampshire the Freewill Baptists had raised a spirited protest against a theology which seemed to rob man of the power of choice. Some twenty churches were governed on the Presbyterian plan. The historic Church of England, which had thus far made but slight headway against the Puritan dread

of ecclesiasticism, was turning over its handful of missions to the feeble beginnings of Protestant Episcopalianism. A few Roman Catholics and Quakers only served to emphasize the overwhelming preponderance of the churches of the Congregational order.

The Congregational ministers represented all shades of evangelical belief, from avowed Unitarianism to the full acceptance of the Westminster Confession. For a generation there had been no great revival among the Churches, and the spirituality of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, which had once warmed the hearts of the people, had become a thing almost unknown.

The war had done much to unsettle faith and loosen old ties. Doubt had even entered the pulpit, and the fashionable skepticism of England and France was infecting all grades of society. There was a crying need for a Gospel of life in the midst of all this spiritual decay, a baptism of faith for this age of doubt, a religion of love and joy to replace these somber doctrines, and withal an ecclesiastical system which, without prelacy, should give intelligent and efficient conduct to the campaign which was to patrol this entire section with zealous evangelists.

Before 1789 New England had been touched here and there by Methodist preachers. Charles Wesley had been heard at least once in Boston, sixty years before. The great Whitefield had traversed the section many times, and finally left his bones there. Boardman and perhaps other Wesleyan missionaries had penetrated New England before the Revolution, and William Black and Freeborn Garrettson had found a hearing within its borders. Recently the young men who were carrying Methodism up the Hudson had spoken their message at several points east-

ward of the imaginary line which divides New York from Connecticut.

Up to May, 1789, however, no permanent lodgment had been effected. On the first day of the New York Conference session of this year Asbury wrote in his Journal, "New England stretcheth out her hand to our ministry, and I trust thousands will soon feel its influence." On the last day, when the name of Jesse Lee was read out for "Stamford," the appointment was merely a "roving commission" to evangelize New England, for the preacher designated had a blank field before him—without stations, societies, or preaching places.

"With a prayer to God for a blessing, and with an expectation of many oppositions," Jesse Lee turned his face eastward and entered Connecticut. On the afternoon of June 17—Bunker Hill Day—he arrived in Norwalk, and went to the house of one Rogers, where a friend had endeavored to make an appointment for him to preach. Hear his account of his first sermon:

"Mrs. Rogers told me her husband was from home, and was not willing for me to preach in his house. I told her we would hold meeting in the road rather than give any uneasiness. We proposed speaking in an old house that stood just by, but she was not willing. I then spoke to an old lady about speaking in her orchard, but she would not consent, but said we would tread the grass down. So the other friend went and gave notice to some of the people, and they soon began to collect, and we went to the road, where we had an apple tree to shade us. When the woman saw that I was determined to preach she said I might preach in the old house; but I told her I thought it would be better to remain where we were. So I began on the side of the road with about

twenty hearers. After singing and praying I preached on John iii, 7, "Ye must be born again." I felt happy that we were favored with so comfortable a place. Most part of the congregation paid particular attention to what I said, and two or three women seemed to hang down their heads, as if they



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

JESSE LEE'S FIRST PREACHING PLACE, NORWALK, CONN.

The preacher probably stood on the rising ground back of the roadside drinking fountain.

understood something of the new birth. After preaching I told the people that I intended to be with them again in two weeks, and if any of them would open their houses to receive me, I should be glad, and if they were not willing, we would meet at the same place. Some of them came, and desired that I should meet at the townhouse the next time; so I gave consent. Who knows but I shall yet have a place in this town where I may lay my head!"

The preacher was now in his thirty-second year. He was tall and broad-shouldered—a Phillips Brooks or Daniel A. Goodsell in physique. When it became his custom a little later to ride one horse and lead another, on his preaching

tours, a rumor sometimes ran ahead of him that "a Methodist was coming who weighed three hundred pounds and rode two horses." The fairness of his skin, with kind gray eyes and a broad, full face, conciliated his auditors before he addressed them, and his voice was mellow and rich in song or sermon. Old Father Ware said of him, "He preached with more ease than any other man I ever knew, and was, I think, the best everyday preacher in the connection."

Lee's Journal gives the itinerary of his first fortnight. On the 18th he was at Fairfield. With shrewdness which matched a Yankee's he engaged the village schoolmaster to send notices home by his pupils that a Methodist would preach at the courthouse at 6 o'clock P. M. His request for permission to speak in this public building had met with the inquiry whether he had a liberal education. "I told him," says the amiable Lee, "I had nothing to boast of, though I had education enough to carry me through the country."

Curiosity attracted a handful, and the preacher's fine singing summoned thirty or forty more. The sermon was on Rom. vi, 23, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," the people "sitting very solemn toward the end." One hearer who was impressed was the tavern keeper's wife. When he left her roof she charged him not a stiver, but recommended him to go preach at the house of her pious sister a few miles further on. The sister proved to be one of a little company who had heard the Gospel from William Black, the Nova Scotian, and ever since had been praying that they might know the truth. How they hung upon his words!

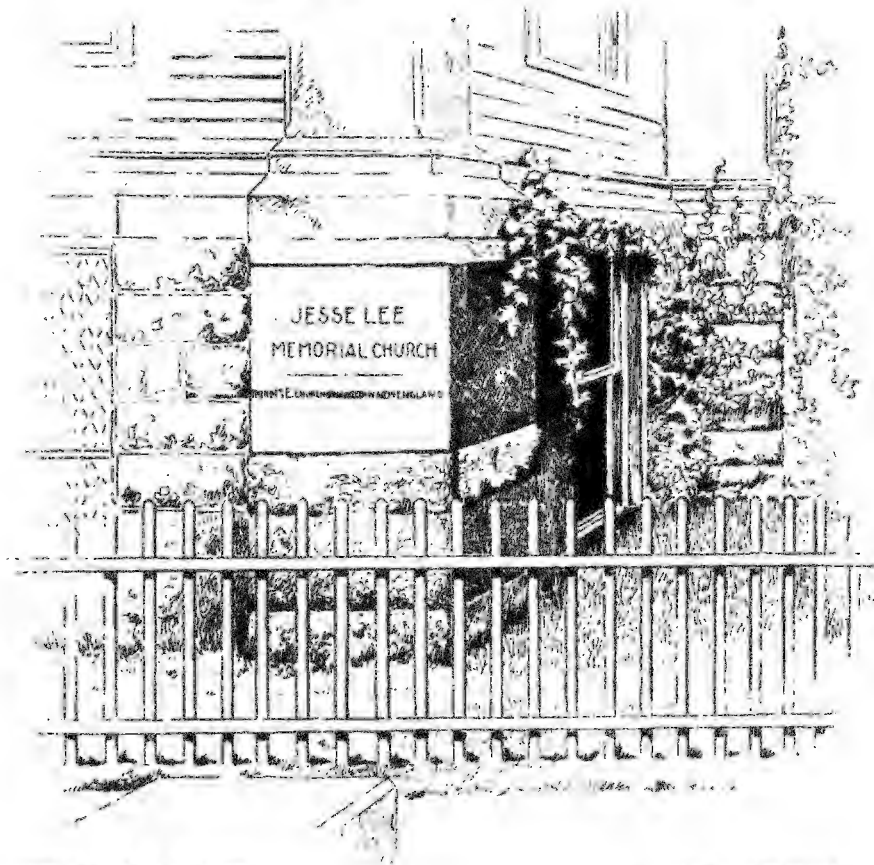
On the 20th, which was Saturday, Lee arrived in New Haven, one of the State capitals and the seat of Yale College. In the heart of this stronghold of Congregationalism the

young Virginian preached in the courthouse on Amos v, 6, "Seek ye the Lord, and ye shall live." President Stiles, of the college, with many students and a minister, came out in a rainstorm to hear him. "I spoke," he writes, "as if I had no doubt but God would reach the hearts of the hearers by the discourse. The people paid great attention to what I said, and several expressed their satisfaction."

From New Haven the missionary turned westward again, reaching Redding on Wednesday. Here he made the chance acquaintance of the old minister, who questioned him seriously as to his doctrines, and thought them unscriptural. The schoolhouse was open to him, and he preached "with liberty" on Isa. lv, 6, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." At Danbury, his next point, he spoke twice, and then passed rapidly southward through Ridgefield, Rockwell, Canaan, and Middlesex, to Norwalk again, in time to keep his appointment of two weeks previous. At the conclusion of his first round he "had some hope that the Lord owned the word preached at each of these places."

On the second round of his circuit Lee's reception was more encouraging. In the house of Deacon Hawley, of Stratfield, some of his stolid hearers wept as he preached, and a few who were spiritually minded began to think of joining the Methodists. In Stratford, where Whitefield's followers had once been active, the parish bell was rung for him and a large company came to hear. One gentleman was proud to entertain the preacher, and another man took hold of his hand and walked with him to the house. This was on the 4th of July. On the 5th he kept his appointment at New Haven, preaching by request behind the high pulpit and velvet desk cushion of the historic meetinghouse on the green. These novel surroundings did not long dampen his

ardor, and "toward the last he had great liberty." The sermon made its impression on one heart at least, for that night a blacksmith called upon him, as he was sitting disheartened in his inn, and asked him to lodge at his house whenever he came to New Haven. It was David Beecher, whose son Lyman, then a lad of twelve, was to be one of the great divines of the next generation and the father of chil-



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

CORNER STONE OF JESSE LEE MEMORIAL CHURCH, RIDGEFIELD, CONN.

dren even more remarkable than himself. Lee went with his hospitable friend. He speaks gratefully of Mrs. Beecher's kindness, and adds, by way of explanation, "but his wife is not a friend to Calvinism."

On Tuesday more than a Sabbath congregation gathered to hear him in the Newtown meetinghouse. "I spoke quite loud and very plain. I felt happy, and my soul did rejoice in the God of my salvation. I spoke of the loss of the soul

and the torments of the damned for some time; I did not give them velvet-mouth preaching, though I had a large velvet cushion under my hands." The next day at Redding the minister tried to induce the evangelist to give a public statement of the doctrines of Methodism instead of a Gospel sermon. But Lee was too shrewd to give his opponents a ground for argument. Some people here were already against him because he preached "the possibility of being suddenly changed from a state of sin to a state of grace."

These first notes of alarm were rapidly taken up. He had been around his circuit but thrice when the ministers began to warn their flocks against strangers, "which," says Lee, "I suppose, was one reason why so many came." At Greenfield he called on schoolmaster Timothy Dwight, afterward the celebrated president of Yale. The cautious teacher invited him to dinner, but declined to let him preach in the school-room. "He did not find freedom to encourage our plan at all," says the itinerant; "yet he said if we came to preach in the place, he would come to hear us, that if there were anything wrong, he might know how to oppose it." At other places the pulpit openly denounced the Methodists, six hundred of whom were "going about the country preaching damnable doctrines and picking men's pockets." Yet even in that minister's parish the people heard Lee "with watery eyes," and one of the deacons scored the persecutor in the public prints.

The minister at Fairfield "had been complaining of our coming," said Lee, "and, I suppose, will complain more." "Are you not come to form a Methodist society here?" asked a tavern keeper. "I am here to call sinners to repentance," was the quick reply, "but if the Lord blesses my labors, and the people desire to join us, I cannot forbid them." "But you

preach too loud," protested another Fairfield man; "it makes the women's heads ache." "I hope God will help me to speak hereafter so as to make their hearts ache," was all the concession the thundering preacher would make to his request.

Nathan Bangs, then a lad of twelve, remembered the stir which Lee's sermons made in that quiet Connecticut corner,



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY J. HARTMANN

JESSE LEE MEMORIAL CHURCH AND PARSONAGE, RIDGEFIELD, CONN.

The society is the third organized by Lee in New England.

though his father kept him beyond earshot of the fascinating heretic. He reports to us also the over-shrewd Yankee opinion that the vagrant Methodist preachers were "broken-down Southerners, too lazy to work, who had taken to this roving life to earn a livelihood."

Amid obloquy like this Lee wrote to Ezekiel Cooper in Maryland: "I feel as if I were just where God would have me to be. I feel happiness in God, my constant Friend, though much deprived of Christian company I have a pretty little two weeks' circuit to myself, about one hundred

and thirty miles in circumference. There are a good many churches, but it is to be feared that many of the ministers are not engaged in the work. I think the time is come to favor New England, and if I had acceptable preachers with me, I believe we should soon cover these States."

Nine weeks of daily preaching elapsed without yielding a single conversion. Some who had at first been friendly were taken in hand by their ministers and came no more. In Fairfield and Milford Lee preached, round after round, to silent and thoughtful congregations, then mounted and rode away without an invitation to any house.

Yet even amid such an atmosphere he could write: "I bless God that he keeps my spirits up under all my discouragements. If the Lord did not comfort me in hoping against hope, or believing against appearances, I should depart from the work in this part of the world; but I still wait to see the salvation of the Lord."

In September the preacher turned his back on his circuit for a prospecting trip to the eastward. In the shore towns of Connecticut and Rhode Island he was well received by the Baptists, "who were lively in religion," and who besought him to labor among them.

Refreshed by this excursion, he plunged into his circuit work again, and on September 26 had the great joy of seeing the first fruits of harvest. The night before he had preached on falling from grace, and after the sermon had spoken personally like a class leader to a score of interested hearers, concluding by announcing that if any were ready to join the Methodists, he would take their names. No one responded; but there were heart searchings in some farmhouses that night, and in the morning "three women joined in class, and

appeared willing to bear the cross, and have their names cast as evil for the Lord's sake."

Two months passed before the little class at Stratfield had a fellow in New England, but at Redding, on the third day after Christmas, a man and a woman joined the society and formed the second class. "Glory be to God," exclaims the faithful husbandman, "that I now begin to see some fruit of



DRAWN BY J. P. DAVIS.

FROM PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE LANSING TAYLOR.

FIRST TOWNHALL, RIDGEFIELD, CONN.

One of Jesse Lee's first preaching places in New England.

my labor in this barren part of the world! O, my God! favor this part of thy vineyard with ceaseless showers of grace."

The raw Virginian learned much during his first half year in the North. He perceived the eagerness of the people for argument and their ready appreciation of intellectual power. He recognized that a large element in society was already in revolt from the dominant Calvinism and ready to applaud its assailants. He no longer shrank from preaching his "principles" when he found that his ready wit, supported by a

masterly use of those twin weapons of the itinerant, the Bible and Fletcher's Checks, was more than a match for the heavy discourse of the learned divines before a popular tribunal.

The substance of Calvinism, he told his hearers, was "the sinner must repent, and he can't repent; and he will go to hell if he don't repent," or, as a lawyer put it, "You must believe or be damned; and you can't believe if you are to be damned." For just two hours, on one occasion, he hammered the doctrine of election, declaring "that all men were called to leave their sins, and with that call power was given to obey it; and that man was called before he was chosen." Two Calvinist ministers sat impatiently through the service and at its close one of them made for the door, announcing that he should prepare a sermon for the next Sabbath "to expose the errors which his people had heard."

All that winter, excepting one brief excursion to Hartford, Lee continued on his original circuit in southwestern Connecticut. Signs of hope were multiplying, the ministers grumbled and thundered, but the people came and went away thoughtful, to come again and again; the meetinghouses were shut against Methodism now, but the first preaching-house was building, new societies were forming, and the single-hearted itinerant could sally out into the storm in such a mood as this: "My soul was transported with joy, the snow falling, the wind blowing, prayer ascending, faith increasing, grace descending, heaven smiling, and love abounding."

Some wag having told a wandering tinker "that the Methodists were likely to beat a hole through the Saybrook platform, and if he could mend that," he might get a job, Lee remarks, "I think we shall soon get such a hole in it that

neither tinker nor minister will be able to stop it so as to keep the people from seeing its flaws."

On Saturday, February 27, 1790, at Dantown, a friend broke the welcome news to Lee that three Methodist preachers were on their way to help him. They arrived that day



DRAWN BY J. OLIVER NUGENT.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

TABLE USED BY JESSE LEE.

This extension table of cherry, owned by Ichabod Taylor, served as Lee's pulpit, church altar, and writing desk, at Limestone, Conn., January 28, 1790.

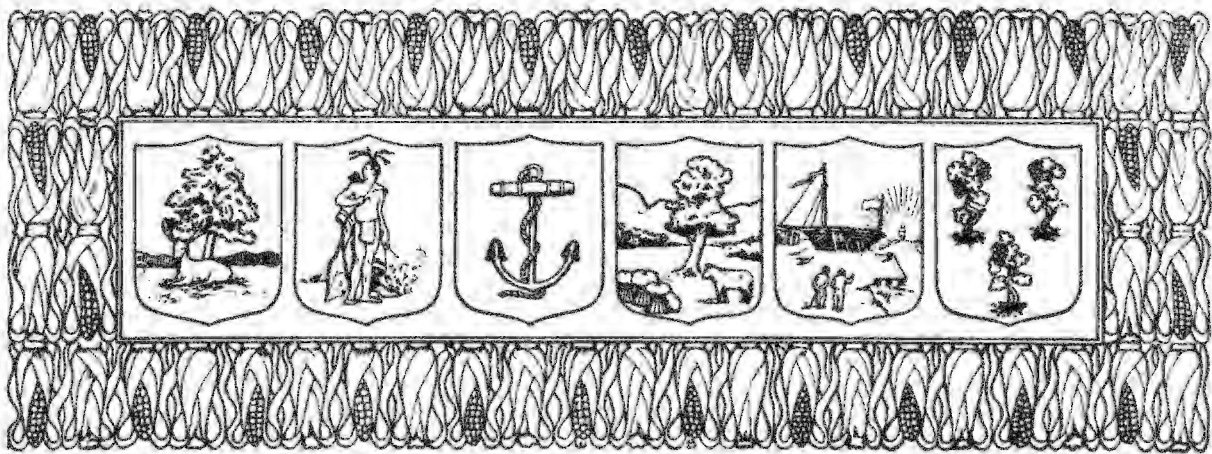
"I stood and looked at them," he says, "when I saw them riding up, and could say from my heart, 'Thou hast well done that thou art come.'" There had been no repinings in his cheery Journal over his lonely winter, but "no one knows," he writes now, "no one but God and myself, what comfort and joy I felt at their arrival. Surely the Lord has had respect unto my prayers and granted my request."

Bangs tells us that the arrival of these brethren so heart-

ened Lee that he preached next day with Whitefieldian fervor. Some "cried aloud for mercy," a novelty which drove others in terror from the house, some leaping from the galleries in their haste.

The new preachers were Jacob Brush, a Long Islander, who had served for seven years in the Middle States; Daniel Smith, a young Philadelphian, with a rare gift for winning his way to the hearts of his hearers; and George Roberts, who had not yet preached a year. Brush died in 1795; Smith married and located in New York city in 1794; but Roberts gave six years of splendid activity to New England as preacher and presiding elder, and after ten years more of successful ministry in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, located in the latter city as a practicing physician, having exchanged the cure of souls for the cure of bodily ills.

The arrival of these brethren set Jesse Lee at liberty to range more widely.



CHAPTER XLIII

Attacking the Puritan Citadel

LEE'S SECOND CIRCUIT.—UP THE CONNECTICUT.—ON TO BOSTON.—UNDER THE GREAT ELM.—CONFERENCE OF 1790.—A FOOTHOLD AT LYNN.—TRAVEL AND STUDY.—ASBURY IN NEW ENGLAND.—CONFERENCE AT LYNN.

ON Christmas Eve in 1789 Jesse Lee had prayed: "O Lord, send more laborers into this part of thy vineyard. I love to break up new ground, and hunt the lost souls in New England, though it is hard work." The reinforcements came and he took prompt advantage of them. Leaving Brush to travel the circuit, he set out with young Smith for new conquests. They preached to weeping throngs from the statehouse steps at Hartford, where Lee had already been heard, and passing in high spirits from town to town, they marked out a second two weeks' circuit of one hundred and twenty miles, which, besides country appointments, embraced New Haven, Hartford, and six other considerable places.

"I am in hopes," said Lee to a critic, "that we shall spread all over New England in a little time," and he wrote to Asbury to send three new preachers without delay.

Lee's Journal abounds in suggestive touches. When he

preached at Middlefield on God's willingness to save all mankind his auditors stared in blank amazement. "I suppose they could not believe it all," he says; "for many in these parts think Christ only died for a few; I hope the truth will hew down Agag." A chance acquaintance on the road told



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

OLD STATEHOUSE, HARTFORD, CONN.

One of Lee's early preaching places in New England.

him of the strange Southern preachers who had spoken the Monday previous at the Hartford Statehouse. "Ah," said the stranger, "these preachers speak louder than our ministers, and raise their heads and spread their hands, and halloo as though they were going to frighten the people."

"It would be well if they could frighten the people out of their sins," retorted the preacher, without revealing his identity.

Following the Connecticut valley, Lee now crossed Massachusetts and set foot in the lower towns of Vermont and New Hampshire, returning before the end of April. The experience was not encouraging. His hearers wanted to discuss points of doctrine, and the old question of the preacher's education came up again. A Baptist minister asked it. "I told him," says Lee, with affected frankness, "that I could speak the English language, but was not perfect in it." When the

man explained that he meant speaking the different languages, Lee told him that he "could talk a little High Dutch." Then he broke into a doctrinal discussion, in which he lost manners and temper. On another occasion he is said to have baffled a similar inquiry with an outburst of this same North Carolina German, which was mistaken for Hebrew by his hearers!

Revisiting his first circuit in May, the people received him like one of their own kinsmen, and so rejoiced his heart that he "determined to go on and break up more New England ground if possible, and then leave it for better and abler brethren to cultivate." Boston was now his goal, and in June, 1790, just a year after entering New England, he set out. Passing through the towns of southern Connecticut, and preaching as he went in the dwellings and meeting-houses of the liberal Rhode Islanders, he came to Providence.

As Lee rode this last stage of his journey to the Puritan capital, praying that if his errand were of God the hearts and homes of the people might be open to him, one met him on the way, as though an angel of the Lord. It was no other than Freeborn Garrettson, accompanied by his black servant Harry Hosier. Garrettson had passed through Boston more than once, on his way to and from Nova Scotia, and now, as presiding elder of the Northern District, including New York and New England, he was returning from a midsummer tour of the whitening harvest field, so bare of laborers. He had preached in Boston and had arranged a preaching place for Lee when he should arrive.

The opening which the presiding elder thought he had secured for his preacher closed up behind him, and when Lee arrived, on July 9, 1790, no audience room, either public or private, was to be had in that city of twenty thousand

souls. Men who had lionized Whitefield, and had given curious attention to the novel doctrines of Black, Garrettson, and other transient preachers of Methodism, turned the cold shoulder upon the resolute missionary who now came to establish societies and build up a church.

Shut out of doors, Lee took to the historic Common. Under "The Great Elm," which was old when the town was settled, and had been a rallying point for many a notable assemblage, the indomitable preacher took his stand at 6 P. M. on Sunday, July 11, 1789, with one or two kindly sympathizers who had brought a deal table for a pulpit. To gather hearers the preacher sang a hymn. Saunterers stopped to listen to the rich voice, and caught the invitation of the words:

Come, humble sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve,
Come, with your guilt and fears oppressed,
And make this last resolve:

I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Like mountains round me close;
I know his courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

Falling on his knees, he prayed with a loud voice, and then delivered an impassioned sermon to a congregation which soon became an attentive throng. At its close the preacher said: "I am a stranger. I have given you the Gospel as it has been given to me. If any of this company will come forward and take my hand, and by so doing pledge himself to meet me in heaven, I will thank God." The multitude went about their business and left the preacher standing alone beside his table—all except one little girl, who slipped her hand timidly into his and whispered, "I'll meet you in heaven, Mr. Lee;" and years afterward on her dying bed, on the very

threshold of that blessed reunion, the faithful sister told this touching story to her minister.

After a week's preaching tour of the north shore fishing towns as far as Portsmouth, Lee returned to Boston. He had no trouble in finding hearers now, and, though he spoke several times, in private houses and a disused meetinghouse,



FROM THE COPPERPLATE IN THE BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.

BOSTON COMMON AND THE OLD ELM, 1790.

The drawing represents the city of Boston viewed from Beacon Hill, west of the Massachusetts State-house. It was made within a few months of Jesse Lee's visit.

the Common alone sufficed to accommodate his vast Sunday throng. Before the end of July he was back again in Connecticut.

In October the Conference met in New York city, and Jesse Lee attended to give an account of his stewardship. He had traveled several thousand miles and preached in six States, visiting most of the large towns of New England. Bishop Asbury applauded his success, ordained him elder, using the simple forms which the plain itinerant preferred,

and stationed him with Daniel Smith at Boston. The other appointments for New England were: Fairfield (formerly Stamford), John Bloodgood; New Haven, John Lee (Jesse's gentler brother); Hartford, Nathaniel B. Mills. The Litchfield Circuit, including some New York appointments, was served from Garrettson's district by Samuel Wigton and Henry Christie.

Saddened and distracted by the tidings of his saintly mother's death, Lee reluctantly turned again to his work. He was no longer a lay evangelist, but a Gospel minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and as he traversed Connecticut he administered the sacraments for the first time. He found Boston in November colder, spiritually, than Boston in July. The east wind and continued rains kept him from his cathedral of the elm, and after trying for a month by "every prudent means" to procure a place for regular preaching he gave up Boston and went to Lynn, twelve miles distant. He was warmly received by Benjamin Johnson, at whose house, on December 14, he preached with great freedom, maintaining with the fervor of one long silenced the doctrine that Christ died for all men. This visit resulted in the first Methodist society in Massachusetts, organized at Lynn on February 20, 1791, with eight members—Benjamin Johnson and Enoch Mudge, and their wives, also Mary Lewis, Hannah Leigh, Ruth Johnson, and Deborah Mansfield. In June the society was strong enough to erect a modest preachinghouse, which was dedicated on June 26. Though he traveled faithfully through his Essex County Circuit, Lee had but one society and fifty-eight members to report to Conference. After a fresh repulse at Boston he began to think the fault lay in himself. "I am still led to hope," he wrote in April, "that the Lord will open the hearts of these people to

attend the word spoken by the Methodists, but let the Lord work by whom he will!"

Conference met in New York in June and returned Lee as presiding elder, with eleven men and seven circuits: Kingston, in Canada; Litchfield, Fairfield, Middlefield, and Hartford, in Connecticut, and Stockbridge and Lynn, at the two ends of Massachusetts. He devoted the first half of his third year in New England to the Lynn Circuit, making an excursion into Rhode Island in November and undertaking a laborious tour of the Connecticut circuits in the spring of 1792, during which he rode five hundred and seventeen miles in thirty-three days, and preached forty sermons. During the Conference year he preached three hundred and twenty-one times. That he found time for study in the midst of such activity is a

marvel, yet he has left a list of the books he read within this period. the New Testament (twice), two volumes of Fletcher, Preacher's Experience, Baxter's Saint's Rest, Barclay's Apology, Sellon's Answer to Coles, John Wesley's Funeral Sermon, by Whitehead, à Kempis's The Christian's Pattern, Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe's Devout Exercises, A View of Religion, by Hannah Adams, Garrettson's Journal, Sweeting's



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

REV. ENOCH MUDGE.

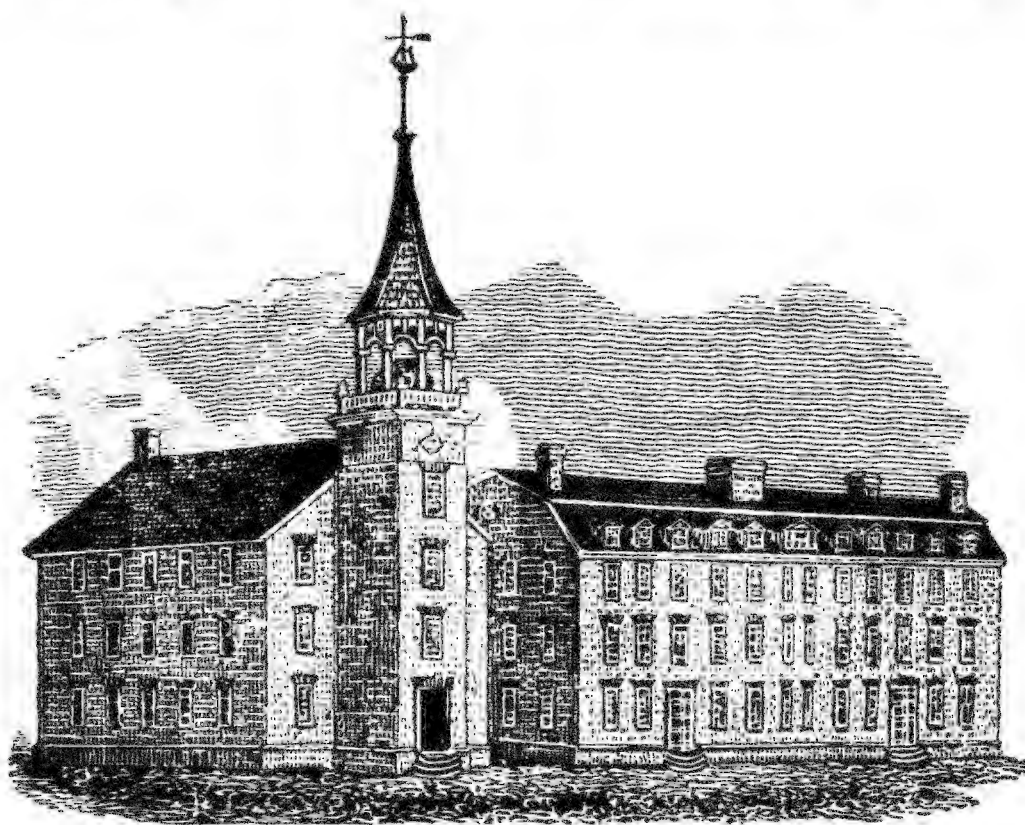
First New Englander who was licensed as a Methodist preacher.

Narrative, Marks of a Work of God, by Edwards; Hammet's Appeal, three volumes of Wesley's Notes, Aristotle, and an election sermon by David Tappan—a total of five thousand four hundred and thirty-four pages. Besides his own six sermons a week he had heard seventy-four preached by other ministers.

In the summer of 1791 Bishop Asbury made an eight weeks' tour of New England. He was already one of the noted men of the country, received with high respect throughout the Middle and Southern States and not unknown in the new country beyond the mountains. In New England he felt like a foreigner, and received a foreigner's treatment. The thickly settled country, houses always in sight and steepled churches visible from every Connecticut hilltop, elicited his comment that "there had been religion in this country once, and I apprehend there is a little in form and theory left; but I fear they are now spiritually dead, and am persuaded that family and private prayer is very little practiced." Lee's feeble societies had a warm welcome for the superintendent, but elsewhere he had scant respect. In the townhall of Stratford, where he preached, "some smiled, some laughed, some swore, some prayed, some wept. Had it been a house of our own," he wrote, "I should not have been surprised to see the windows broken." The New Haven divines were cold and distant. President Stiles and others heard his sermon, but no one had a hand for the preacher. With the interests of the Methodist schools on his heart, Asbury attended prayers in Yale College chapel; all was gravity and decorum, but no one had the courtesy to speak to this representative of more than sixty thousand Christians. Of course he felt the slight, but his remark is kindly "Should Cokesbury or Baltimore ever furnish the

opportunity, I, in my turn, will requite their behavior by treating them as friends, brethren, and gentlemen."

The whole journey to Boston was a novel and unpleasant experience for him. He wrote: "I am unknown, and have small congregations, to which I may add a jar in sentiment, but I do not dispute" and again, "I feel that I am not among my own people, though I believe there are some who fear



FROM A WOODCUT OF 1763.

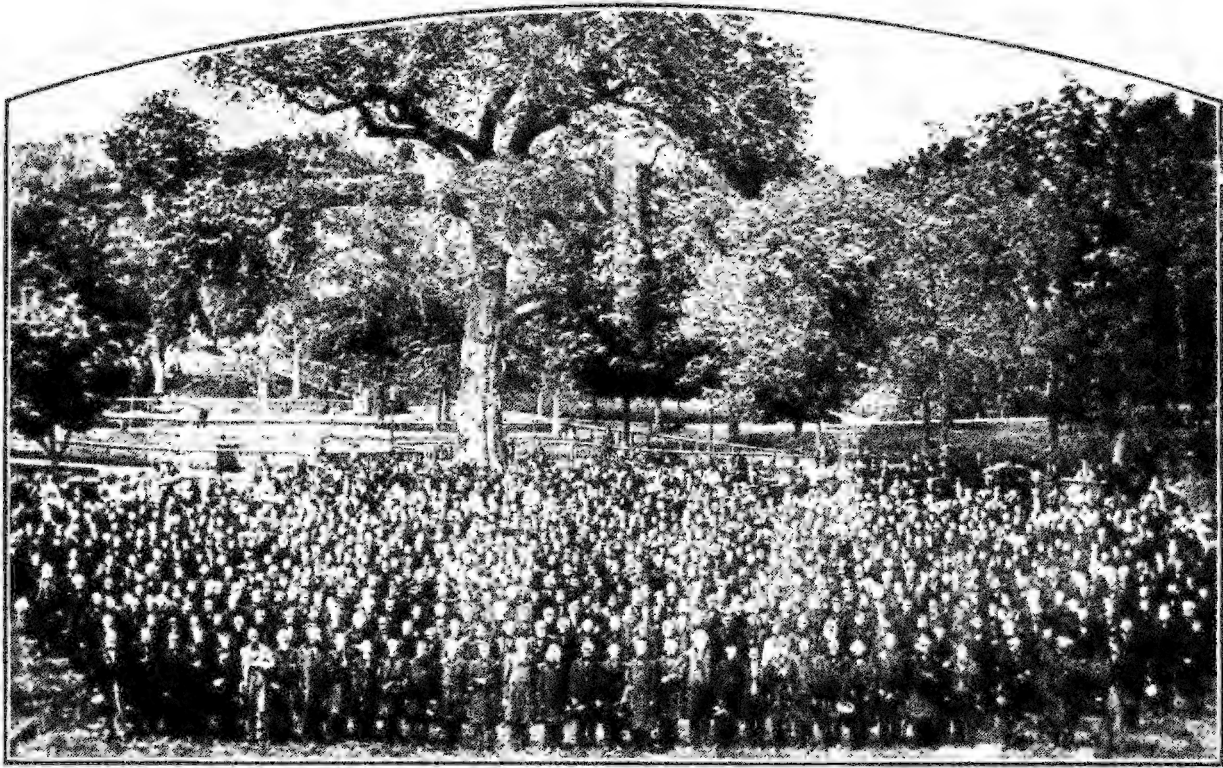
YALE COLLEGE. THE CHAPEL AND CONNECTICUT HALL.

Showing their appearance at the time of Asbury's first visit.

God." Even in Boston only twenty or thirty came to hear his opening sermon, though a great room had been provided. The title of "Bishop" was still an offense in the nostrils of the sons of the Puritans, and this plain apostle had to suffer. He suspected that "those who professed friendship for us had been ashamed" to spread the notice of the sermon. More came the next evening, but the "sinners in the streets" were annoyingly boisterous, "owing, perhaps, to the loud-

ness of my voice." He had no liberty, and determined to quit a place so inhospitable. "When a stranger in Charleston, wicked Charleston," he exclaims, "I was kindly invited to eat and drink by many—here by none."

A year later Lee joined a few poor people in society in Boston, the first in the city, on July 13, 1792. Lynn, with



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE NEW ENGLAND METHODIST CENTENARY GATHERING, 1866.

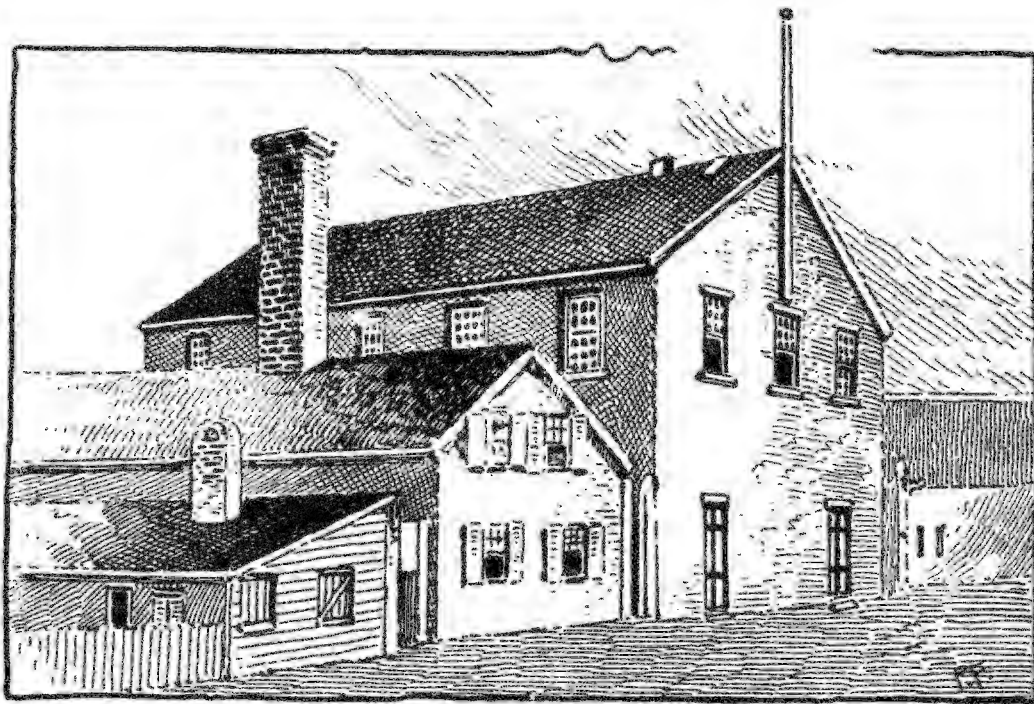
This group of preachers and laymen was photographed on Boston Common, with the old elm in the background.

its generous people, flourishing society, and neat chapel, was a welcome relief from the buffetings of the capital city. From this place, he prophesied, "shall the light of Methodism and truth radiate through the State." Here, in August, 1792, the bishop held the first Methodist Conference in New England. Eight or nine preachers attended, among them the Rev. Hope Hull, a young man from Savannah, of remarkable eloquence. The daily preaching, the spirited exhortations, the

joyous hymns, the bishop's ordination sermon, and the love feast on the last day of the session marked a religious occasion entirely new in the calendar of Puritan festivals. The membership reported for New England already approached a thousand. The district was divided, Brush presiding in Connecticut, Lee in the East, while the Berkshire appointments were supplied from Garrettson's Albany District. Asbury returned to the South still puzzled over the New England character. "Never have I seen any people who could talk so long, so correctly, and so seriously about trifles," said this single-hearted evangelist, to whom all things were trifling in comparison with the momentous subject of a soul's relation to God. As he considered what he had seen and felt he ventured a prophecy which long since came to fulfillment: "I am led to think that the Eastern Church will find this saying hold true in the case of the Methodists, namely, 'I will provoke you to jealousy by a people that were no people, and by a foolish nation will I anger you.'"

The holding of the Conference at Lynn in 1792 marks the establishment of Methodism in New England. Much remained to be done by Lee and his zealous associates and successors, but a permanent foothold had been gained. The victory must not be measured by the few feeble societies or the handful of preachers reported to that pioneer Conference in the humble chapel. The small things of that day were the presage of great ones. At the end of a century, 1890, the number of Methodist churches in New England was 1,369; their membership aggregated 146,570. In Maine, Vermont, and Rhode Island the Methodist churches outnumbered those of the Congregational order. The influence of Methodism upon New England is beyond the expression of mere statistics, however imposing. The transforming work

of Methodists has been thus stated by the President W F Warren: "Under the old school of Calvinism the ideals of life had declined; education grew narrow and barren, art was forgotten, the knowledge of music almost entirely died out; men came to believe themselves possessed of devils and dominated by witches. No wonder that the devout Jonathan Edwards was ejected from his pulpit by his own parishioners, and that the original Puritan Churches were secularized to the point



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

FROM A PICTURE BELONGING TO PROFESSOR S. W. UPHAM.

FIRST METHODIST PREACHINGHOUSE IN BOSTON.

of adopting for their self-preservation the notorious Halfway Covenant!" The astonishing doctrines of which Lee was the herald acted like an inspiration. "He broke the spell which rested like a nightmare upon the spirit of every New England child. He assured them then that not one 'reprobate' or 'preterite' of the old Calvinistic description ever existed. He claimed that God's impartial love was over all men, that Christ had died for all, that the mission of the

Comforter was to all. The Church ceased to depend upon the taxgatherer . and began to remember that she was intended to conquer and transform the world. A new spirit came over the whole realm of education. The public schools, originally intended for the elect boys only, were broadened into schools for both sexes. Art and music were welcomed back to the haunts of Christian men."



CHAPTER XLIV

Progress Southward

THE SOUTH THE NURSERY OF METHODISM. — NORTH CAROLINA. — O'KELLY IN DANGER. — INCIDENTS OF PIONEERING. — MISTRESS MORRIS'S FITS. — AN ORIGINAL. — SOUTH CAROLINA ENTERED.

AMERICAN Methodism may have been cradled in New York. Certainly it reached maturity soonest under Southern skies. For a generation after Embury's lips were unsealed the great majority of societies and members were to be found below the famous line of Mason and Dixon. Even the men whose courage, energy, and perseverance opened New England and the Hudson valley to Methodism were the Lees, Garrettsons, Coopers, Hicksons, and Pickerings of Maryland and Virginia.

These two great States were nurseries of the Methodist prophets, and from them also went out the evangelists who carried "scriptural holiness" to the Carolinas and Georgia on the south and to the vast regions beyond the mountains soon to be the noble States of Tennessee and Kentucky.

North Carolina Methodism dates its rise from the Baltimore Conference of May 21, 1776, which organized the "Carolina" Circuit, and manned it with three preachers—Edward Dromgoole, Francis Poythress, and Isham Tatum. But there were

already nearly seven hundred Methodists within its vague boundaries. Probably Robert Williams and other itinerants in the southern counties of Virginia had been preaching here for three years; Joseph Pilmoor, on the way to and from Charleston early in 1773, had found willing hearers in many towns, had addressed a large assembly in the courthouse at Wilmington, and had noted hopefully of Newberne, "People of fashion think it a privilege to hear the Gospel."

In 1776 the preachers began to come regularly to the eastern part of North Carolina, and at the same time to enter the counties further west from the Pittsylvania Circuit of Virginia. Other circuits were rapidly organized—Roanoke, New Hope, Tar River, Yadkin, Guilford, Caswell, Pasquetank, Salisbury, Bertie, and other places, until in 1784 nearly one fourth of the Methodist preachers and members in America were within "the old North State." Among the men who had wielded the sickle in this harvest were John Dickins, LeRoy Cole, John Major, Richard Ivey, Edward Dromgoole, Isham Tatum, Francis Poythress, Philip Bruce, Jesse Lee, Beverly Allen, and other successful evangelists. Within eight years they and their fellow-laborers had extended the work into nearly every county from the ocean to the mountains, and the twelve circuits which they manned returned four thousand members.

Bladen Circuit, in the southeastern part of the State, was formed in 1787 by Daniel Coombs. Beverly Allen and James O'Kelly had pioneered the region as early as 1779. On one of his visits the latter preacher fell into the hands of a band of Tories, who tied him up to a peach tree. A party of Whigs coming up just then, a smart skirmish ensued, O'Kelly being exposed to the fire of both parties, until the arrival of reinforcements under Colonel Slingsby, the noted partisan, who put the Whigs to flight. The colonel recognized the

Methodist, and asked him to preach to his men. O'Kelly complied, the colonel reverently doffing his hat meanwhile.

Several interesting incidents, and at least one notable character, are connected with the advance of Methodism into the southwestern counties. Several Methodist families settled in Lincoln County in 1788. On their journey together from Virginia these godly folk had daily prayer and stopped at intervals for religious meetings, some of which were marked by deep emotion. A planter attracted by their hymns and strange outcry was himself convicted and converted. Arrived in their new homes, they astounded their placid German neighbors by their shoutings. "Your mother has a fit; she will die," said one to Nancy Morris, whose mother could not restrain her joy when a Methodist local preacher held forth in the Lutheran meetinghouse. "O no," was the daughter's calm reply, "mother is subject to these fits; she will get over it." The daughter subsequently married the Rev Daniel Asbury, who was sent in 1789 with young Enoch George (afterward bishop) to form the Lincoln Circuit in this region.

Daniel Asbury had been trained for the ministry in a rough school. A native of Virginia, he had early crossed the mountains and at the age of sixteen was captured by the Indians and adopted into the Shawnee tribe. Five years later he returned home a seasoned woodsman and recklessly sinful. When reclaimed under Methodist preaching he became one of the most effective of frontier preachers. After two years in Virginia the bishop sent him to the French Broad Mission, in 1788, where among outlaws and Indians he needed all his hardihood, but faced without flinching the hardships of that "Land of the Sky." Uncouth of speech, reckless of grammar and rhetoric, reading no books but the Book, the Methodist classics, and the human heart, he was

nevertheless a preacher to whom men of intellect must listen—such was his knowledge of Scripture and the directness, sincerity, and force of his address. He married Nancy Morris, and devoted the greater part of his long life to preaching in the Carolinas and Georgia. He died in 1825,



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY T. H. LINDSEY

THE RAPIDS OF THE FRENCH BROAD.

and was buried in the yard of Rehoboth Church, the first which was built by the Methodists in North Carolina west of the Catawba.

South Carolina Methodism is younger by a decade than that of its sister State. Both John and Charles Wesley had visited Charleston during their brief connection with Oglethorpe's colony in Georgia, and John had preached in St. Philip's Church, the pride of the English settlers. Whitefield crossed and recrossed the State in his visits to his Orphan House at Ebenezer, near Savannah, and uttered his flaming evangel in Charleston.

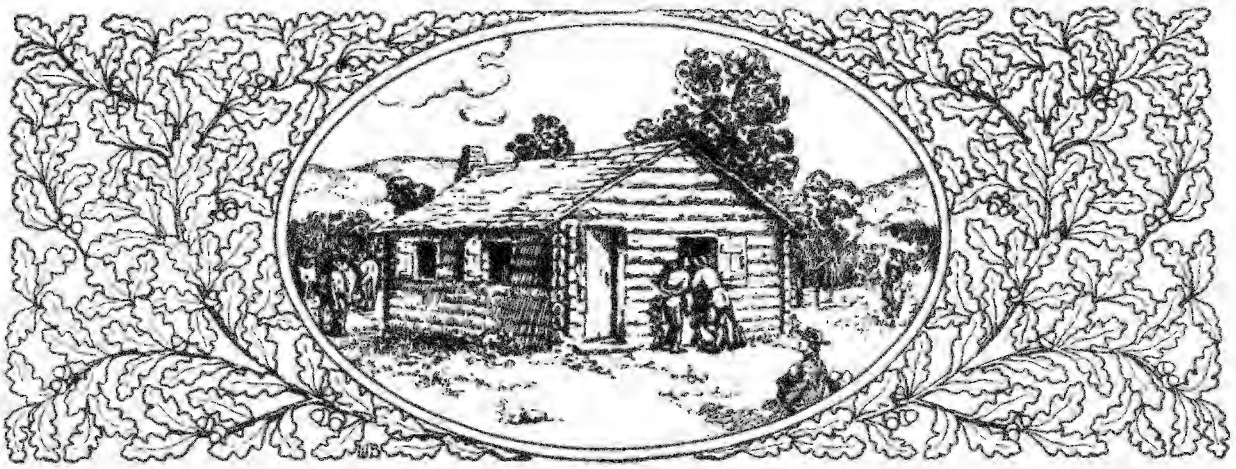
In 1773 came Joseph Pilmoor, his horse and chaise lumbering through dreary pine barrens and sandy wastes, and

beaten by such storms as made the journey a distressful memory. On Friday evening, January 22, he preached the first Methodist sermon in Charleston to a small but serious company. Though expecting ill treatment, he was well received, and had good congregations so long as he stayed in town. "A vast multitude" heard his farewell sermon, on March 8, 1773, and though he had entered the place a stranger, many came next morning to take leave of him and heartily wish him success.

Lack of men and the presence of armies prevented the Methodists from following up the beginning made by Pilmoor until the Christmas Conference of 1784-1785. At that time Asbury determined upon a forward movement in the South, and selected John Tunnell, Henry Willis, Beverly Allen, and Woolman Hickson to lead the advance. They were four evangelists of uncommon power. Tunnell had been itinerating since 1777, though of frail physique, and he was a most heavenly minded man and persuasive preacher. In 1787 he was chosen to head the pioneer band who were to found Methodism west of the Alleghanies, and here he died of consumption, in July, 1790—"a great saint," as Asbury declared. Henry Willis was a choice spirit. He was a Virginian who had joined Conference with Tunnell. His slight figure and intelligent countenance became well known throughout the connection, for he was a dear friend of Bishop Asbury, and the first man ordained by him. He died in 1808, and over his grave the bishop sighed, "Ah, when shall I look upon thy like again?"

Allen's was a chequered career. Few excelled him in brilliancy of natural gifts. He won friends easily and had great success until 1792, when he was expelled from the Conference and fled from justice into Kentucky. Years after-

ward Peter Cartwright found him there, as a physician, still cherishing his affection for the Church of his first love. Hickson was another of those eager youths who sacrificed their lives to their zeal for the cause. He had been in the work but three years, and lived only until 1788. In the previous year, when stationed at New York, he preached the sermon which resulted in the formation of the first Methodist class in Brooklyn, under the leadership of Nicholas Snethen.



CHAPTER XLV

Still Facing the South

ASBURY ENTERING SOUTH CAROLINA. — FIRST METHODIST CHURCH IN CHARLESTON. — VERILY A CONFERENCE ALSO. — IN GEORGIA, ON THE TRACK OF JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY.

THE bishop presided in person at the inauguration of the work of carrying Methodism southward. With Willis and Jesse Lee he entered South Carolina at Cheraw, on February 17, 1785, and on the 23d was at Georgetown. Here a Mr. Wayne, a cousin of "Mad Anthony," befriended the Methodists, and gave them letters to Mr. Wells, a merchant of Charleston, who received them kindly and to the spiritual awakening of himself and his wife. The city seemed to be under "a great dearth of religion," and when the bishop and Lee returned to the North a fortnight later they "left some under gracious impressions."

The labors of the first year bore such fruit that in 1786 the Peedee Circuit—from Georgetown, S. C., to within ten miles of Salisbury, N. C.—had a membership of two hundred and eighty-five whites and ten colored; the Santee Circuit, with seventy-five in society, included the territory on either side of the Santee and Wateree Rivers from Nelson's Ferry to Providence; and the Broad River Circuit, which commenced

in the Dutch Fork above Columbia and extended to Pacolet Springs, had two hundred white and ten colored. These extensive circuits covered the settled portion of the State.

When Asbury rode toward Charleston on his second visit, in January, 1786, it was “ no small comfort ” to him to see the frame of a Methodist church in process of erection. In the city itself the Methodists were about to build. The Conference was held this year, as in 1785, in North Carolina. Isaac Smith was one of the new men assigned to South Carolina. He was a Virginian, and a scarred war veteran, who lived to be honored as one of the fathers of the Church. He died in 1834, “ most honored and beloved.” His preaching and prayers were accompanied with that strange power that sometimes felled men to the earth. His sermons were brief and pointed, and his frank and manly address helped him to win his way among the roughest of men. The Edisto Circuit, founded by Smith and Willis, reported two hundred and forty whites and four colored at the Conference of 1787.

Other new men were Hope Hull, “ young, but indeed a flame of fire,” and a colleague, Jeremiah Mastin, of like spirit. The former was an orator of rare grace and power, “ a fine specimen of the old-fashioned American Methodist preacher

His words rushed upon his audience like an avalanche, and multitudes seemed to be carried before him like the yielding captives of a stormed castle.” These two brethren brought the Peedee Circuit in a single year up to seven hundred and ninety white and thirty-three colored members. Mastin was afterward sent to Holston, and located there in 1790. Hull spent most of his life in Georgia as preacher and teacher. He died in 1818. Richard Swift, the junior preacher on the Santee Circuit, and Stephen Johnson, on Broad River, were also faithful workers.

On March 22, 1787, the first Conference in South Carolina convened at Charleston. The new meetinghouse on Cumberland Street, called the "Blue Meeting," was ready for occupancy, and the two bishops preached within its walls to crowded and solemn congregations. Richard Ivey and Reuben Ellis were among the preachers of this year—two of the most useful of all the early itinerants.

At the second Conference, in March, 1788, one of the twelve stationed preachers was Michael Burdge, who was sent to Waxhaws to preach to the Catawba Indians. He was afterward, in 1808, one of the Methodist pioneers of Alabama. Thomas Humphries, who was appointed to Peedee Circuit, had been one of the volunteers—John Major was the other—who had carried Methodism into Georgia two years before. William Gassaway, who this year entered upon his sixteen years of ministerial service, was one of those characters for which the Methodist itinerancy has been noted from the beginning. He had been a leader of the revels of his locality, and the first question raised by his companions when he went forward for prayers was: "What shall we do for a fiddler, now the Methodists have got Bill Gassaway? He will never play the fiddle, or drink, or fight any more." His conviction of sin was so distorted that he considered himself unworthy to drink pure water. His ignorance of spiritual things was complete, and having been awakened by a Methodist preacher, he hardly dared seek counsel of a Presbyterian elder, the only intelligent Christian he knew. The good elder proved a faithful friend, and, following his directions, Gassaway was joyously converted. It is said that the Bible was almost the only book he ever read. "Study and preach, preach and study," from day to day, was his plan, and such was his influence upon William Capers that he once dis-

suaded that future bishop from entering on a course of study for the ministry. The young man's arguments the minister finally disposed of with, "Well, Billy, if you are called to preach, and sinners are daily falling into hell, take care lest the blood of some of them be found on your skirts." Plain and uneducated as he was, few excelled him as a successful evangelist. All classes alike recognized the force of his appeals and his prayers.

Asbury's Journals continue to record the incidents of his annual visits to South Carolina, traveling through the State, holding the quarterly meetings of the circuits and presiding at the Conferences in Charleston. In 1788-1789 nearly one thousand members were added. In 1789-1790 the increase was six hundred and thirty. Asbury wrote on his next visit, in 1791: "I rejoice to find that this desert country had gracious souls in it. O how great the change in the flight of six years! We have now many friends and some precious souls converted to God. Glory be to the Lord most high!" There were now four thousand eight hundred and thirty-five Methodists in South Carolina, the increase being no less than one thousand two hundred and seventy-seven.

The South Carolina Conference of 1791 gave rise to a vexatious controversy which resulted in a schism which for a time seemed formidable. Asbury had appointed James Parks to Charleston, when Coke, belated by storms, arrived from the West Indies with William Hammett, who had been a useful missionary among the blacks. Hammett, though not a member of Conference, claimed the circuit to which another had already been assigned, and by his eloquence and social charm quickly won local support. "I am somewhat distressed," wrote Asbury at this time, "at the uneasiness of the people, who claim a right to choose their own preachers—

a thing quite new among Methodists. None but Mr Hammett will do them. We shall see how it will end." The end did not come soon nor easily. The pugnacious Hammett followed the bishops to the North, accusing them in print of tyrannous exercise of power and of hostility to him because he was Wesley's friend. They were inflexible, and Hammett accordingly set up an independent society in Charleston. His building was called "Trinity Church," and the several societies formed in connection with him, in Georgetown, Savannah, and Wilmington, were called "Primitive Methodists," in distinction from "the Asbury Methodists," as they chose to call the bishop's followers. After their leader's death, in 1803, all their property reverted to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the first secession ended in absorption and peace.

Georgia will always be famous in Methodist history as the field of the early missionary labors of John and Charles Wesley and the scene of the scheme of philanthropy which brought Whitefield so often to our shores. Hither, too, in February, 1773, came Joseph Pilmoor on his Southern tour. He found Savannah a town of three thousand inhabitants and three churches—Lutheran, Anglican, and Independent—in the first of which he was permitted to preach. He found friends, and was pleasantly treated during his ten days' sojourn, one of which was made memorable by a visit to Whitefield's orphanage. Pilmoor planted no societies, and from his visit until after the War of Independence no regular preachers went into Georgia, although among the immigrants from North Carolina and Virginia were families which had been touched by the live coals of Methodism.

Writing of the Conference of 1785, Coke said: "Beverly Allen has all Georgia to range in." Allen, though a brilliant

man and an attractive and powerful preacher, was a ranger by nature, and better suited with a roving commission than with stated responsibilities. For a time he was admired by the brethren—though distrusted by the bishop—and wrote long letters to Wesley, not concealing his own share in the events which he narrated. His fall from grace, expulsion from Conference, in 1792, and flight from justice dealt a heavy blow to Georgia Methodism in its beginnings.

If Allen labored at all on his appointment, in 1785, it was “probably in Wilkes County, then embracing all upper Georgia.” Seventy members were reported to the Conference of 1786, and two Virginians, Thomas Humphries and John Major, volunteered for that field. Humphries was a handsome man, of keen wit, fearless spirit, and considerable power, while his colleague was a “living, loving soul,” whose emotional nature early consumed his frail physique. Major died soon, and was remembered by old Methodists as “a weeping prophet.” Humphries eventually married and located in South Carolina, where he often preached. He was a plain and rough-spoken man. This characteristic anecdote is related of one of his appearances in Georgetown, S. C.: A timid sister had begged him to consider that his hearers were “town folks,” and that it “would not do to be too plain.” For a part of his sermon he had seemed to observe the warning, when suddenly he shouted, “If you don’t repent, you’ll all be damned!” Then, as if recollecting himself, he apologized, “I beg your pardon; you are town folks.” This was repeated at intervals throughout the sermon, which closed with this emphatic declaration: “Town folks you may be, but if you don’t repent, and become converted, God will cast you into hell just as soon as he will a piney-woods sinner.”

To the faithful labors of Humphries and Major Methodism owes its rise in Georgia. They entered it when not more than five hundred of its eighty thousand inhabitants were Christians, and when there were not ten Christian ministers in the State. "The settlements were upon the creeks and rivers," says Smith, "and the inhabitants were thinly settled all over the face of the country. The dwellings were pole-cabins, and even in the cities were built largely of logs. There were no roads—only pathways and Indian trails. There were no houses of worship, and the missionaries preached only in private dwellings. The work had all to be laid out, and for the first year it is probable that the two preachers visited together the settlements which were thickest, and organized societies where they could. We conclude that they compassed the country from the Indian frontier on the north to the lower part of Burke County on the south." Four hundred and thirty members were brought into the society.

Allen left his appointment in South Carolina in May, 1787, for a visit to Georgia. He mentions in a letter to Wesley the good work of the two preachers, and of his own labors he writes: "During my stay of three weeks the power of God attended us in a particular manner. The people had waited with impatience to see me there. Many of them had known me in the North; and they were not disappointed, for such gracious seasons will not soon be forgotten;" and of one solemn service in the forest: "Toward the close of my discourse one poor sinner dropped to the ground in silence, while many others cried aloud for mercy and several found peace and pardon to their souls."

The next year Georgia became a district, with the veteran Richard Ivey for presiding elder. Major, with one young

helper, took Burke Circuit, which comprised the territory south and southwest from Augusta, and Humphries, with another, took the rest of the State. The little band gathered in over six hundred members during the year.

In April, 1788, Asbury came to Georgia to hold the first Conference of that State. John Major went to South Carolina to meet him, but was so wasted with consumption that he could not attend the sessions, and died before its close. The bishop met the preachers—ten in all, four of these probationers—in a house, probably David Merriweather's, at the forks of Broad River, now Elbert County. There were hopeful signs in the outlook. "Many," notes the bishop, "that had no religion in Virginia have found it after their removal into Georgia and South Carolina. Here at least the seed has sprung up wherever it may have been sown."

This year was the first of Hope Hull's long connection with Georgia Methodism. He was a house carpenter from Baltimore, was himself built on a generous scale, physically and mentally, and even now, though only in his twenty-fifth year, was a preacher of uncommon energy and unction. After his location, in 1795, he established an academy near Washington, and became an influential citizen of the State and one of the promoters of the university. He died in 1818.

Richard Ivey was in charge of the work in Georgia until 1793. He is said to have been a small, active man. He was fully worn out by the service, and died two years later. Excepting Hull, the men who had been sent to his frontier district were scarcely adequate to the demands of the case, and when the total membership reached two thousand, as it did in 1790, it came to a standstill, and for several years heavily declined. In 1794 the Georgia Conference was united

with the South Carolina Conference, and did not regain its separate existence for more than a generation.

A beginning had been made for Methodism in Georgia. The cities, Savannah and Augusta, were yet to be occupied, and fresh bands of better equipped but not more faithful itinerants were to extend the circuits and swell the numbers in society, until the great revival at the end of the old century and the camp meetings which followed should give to Georgia Methodism numbers and power.



CHAPTER XLVI

On the Western Waters

THE GATEWAY OF THE WEST.—THE "LAND OF THE SKY."—THE
HEROES OF KENTUCKY.—THE CUMBERLAND PIONEERS.

IN the later years of the Revolutionary War the fertile region west of North Carolina and Virginia, watered by the Cumberland and Tennessee and other affluents of the Ohio, was rapidly filling up with settlers from those States. Between 1758, when the North Carolina pioneers spied out the richness of the "Land of the Sky" that lay beyond the Blue Ridge, down to 1784, it is said that ten thousand settlers followed them into the region between the Cumberland and the Carolinas. Their log cabins were scattered along the rivers, and the settlements were without State organization, without newspapers, schools, or churches.

A new band of pilgrim fathers was landing on the shores of a new domain. The gateway of the West was open. In the eager throng that pressed through it to form the States of Tennessee and Kentucky, and then to cross the Ohio and carve a dozen imperial States from the vast northwest territory, were to be found men tired of the restraints of the old communities, and not unfrequently selfish seekers for gain, and sometimes lawless adventurers. Upon the Chris-

tian Churches of the East fell the responsibility of seizing and holding these nascent commonwealths for Christ.

For this work the Methodist Episcopal Church appears to



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY T. H. LINDSEY.

IN THE "LAND OF THE SKY."

Country near Asheville, N. C., penetrated by Asbury on horseback.

an entire State. Finally in Francis Asbury the Methodists possessed a general superintendent endowed with every qualification for the direction of such an unparalleled campaign.

have been designed by Providence. It seemed conscious of a call. Her preachers were youthful and energetic, and their Gospel was hopeful and joyous. They were men of simple life, raised above the rude conditions of frontier existence by no distinction of dress, speech, or education. Their itinerant system easily solved the problem of their support, so difficult else in a new country, and at the same time enabled a few evangelists to cover effectually

The first Methodist preacher appointed to work in what is now eastern Tennessee was Jeremiah Lambert. He was a native of New Jersey, "taken from the common walks of life," but gifted with a fine intelligence and quick sympathy. He was sent to the Holston Circuit, to which he was sent in 1783, "embraced all the settlements on the Watauga, Nolachucky, and Holston Rivers," comprising nearly a dozen counties now included in East Tennessee and southwestern Virginia. Sixty members were already reported in this field, either Methodist families from Carolina or the harvest of faithful local preachers whose names are written on high. The year after Lambert's labor here he was elected elder by the Christmas Conference and sent to the island of Antigua, where Coke was deeply interested in a missionary enterprise among the colored people. He died in 1786, "justly lamented," say the Minutes, "very useful, humble and holy, diligent in life and resigned in death."

The second missionary to the Holston settlements was Henry Willis, one of the best men in the itinerancy. After one year on the circuit he was appointed presiding elder, in 1785, of the district in western North Carolina to which Holston was attached. Two young men, Richard Swift and Michael Gilbert, were appointed to travel the circuit, now grown beyond one man's ability to serve. The presiding elder for 1786 was Reuben Ellis, one of the North Carolina veterans, and the young preachers were Mark Whittaker and Mark Moore.

Four hundred and fifty members were reported for Holston in 1787, and a loud call for more missionaries went up to the Conference. Saintly John Tunnell was placed in command of the volunteers. He had been ten years a preacher, and, though already a prey to pulmonary disease, could not be

deterred by hardship from what he conceived to be his duty. Friends in the West Indies had offered him a salary and a manservant if he would settle among them as a minister, but he chose to use his declining strength to publish the Gospel in the settlements where the need was so intense. In July, 1790, while returning from the Conference in Ken-



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY T. H. LINDSEY

A FARMHOUSE IN THE "LAND OF THE SKY."

tucky, Asbury heard that the intrepid missionary had finished his course. He died at Sweet Springs, and was buried at Dew's Chapel, where the bishop "preached his funeral" from the words, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Beginning a few months after his conversion, Tunnell had preached thirteen years. "Few men," says the bishop, "as public ministers were better known or more beloved. He was a simple-hearted, artless, childlike man, an improving preacher, a most affectionate friend, and a great saint." The tones of his lutelike voice and the benediction of his countenance were long a blessed memory with those among whom he ministered.

The call of 1787 was for "young men who counted not their lives dear;" for the red men were restless, the fords were treacherous, and there was not always much to choose between a bed under the stars and the shelter of a mountaineer's cabin. Thomas Ware, who was one of the volunteers, enumerates some of the features of the Holston settlements: "Many were refugees from justice. Some there were who had borrowed money or were otherwise in debt, and had left their creditors and securities to do as best they could; some had been guilty of scandalous or heinous crimes and had fled from justice; others had left their wives and were living with other women. Among these there were a few who had made a profession of religion, and two in particular who had been ministers of the Gospel and who opposed the Methodists very violently. In many of the settlements we found some who had heard the Methodist preachers, and they hailed us with a hearty welcome. Societies were formed, log chapels erected, and three hundred members received this year."

In the fall Ware was detailed to lay out a new circuit on the upper courses of the Holston and French Broad, and the hardships of that winter surpassed any experience of his forty years of service. Fording torrents, sleeping in draughty cabins, hungry, thirsty, and saddle-sore, he made his way south along the Holston, thence by following a blazed trail he crossed the divide on the edge of the Cherokee country, and reached the waters of the French Broad. Here were some settlers who rejoiced at the sound of a preacher's voice, and here, too, were outlaws who vented their hatred of social order by driving out its representative.

The year 1788 was made memorable among the Western preachers by a visit from their leader. In May, 1788, As-

bury, unused to mountaineering, made the arduous journey from North Carolina through the Holston country, and held a Conference at a place which has been identified as Key-woods, near Saltville, in the southwestern angle of Virginia.



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY T. H. LINDSEY.

KILLIAN'S HOUSE, BEAVER DAM VALLEY, NEAR ASHEVILLE, N. C.

Bishop Asbury preached here in 1800 and at several times in later years.

We have already noticed the occasion (in chapters 35 and 36). "The best of all was their labors were owned and blessed of God, and they were like a band of brothers, having one purpose and one end in view—the glory of God and the salvation of immortal souls. When the preachers met from their different and distant fields of labor they had a feast of love and friendship; and when they parted they wept and embraced each other as brothers beloved."

Two new circuits appear in the Minutes of this year, 1788:

French Broad, for whose arduous requirements no better man could have been named than Daniel Asbury; and New River, where Thomas Ware and Jesse Richardson found themselves the only religious teachers on the four weeks' round. “The hearts and houses of the people were open to receive us,” wrote Ware; and severe as the winters were in a country where “galloping” consumption carried off many a sturdy young preacher, he could say, “I passed them very pleasantly to myself, and so it would have been in Greenland itself, with the sentiments and feelings I possessed.”

Asbury continued to pour preachers into these high valleys with a lavish hand. New names appear every year. The presiding elder in 1788 had been Edward Morris, in 1789 John Tunnell again, in 1790 Charles Hardy, in 1791 Mark Whittaker, and in 1792 Barnabas McHenry. Among the traveling preachers of these years are Jeremiah Mastin, Joseph Doddridge, John Baldwin, Jeremiah Abel, Daniel Shines, Daniel Lockett, Joseph Pace, Julius Conner, John McGee, John West, John Ball, John Sewell, Salathiel Weeks, James Ward, Stephen Brooks, William Burke, David Haggard, Jeremiah Norman. Many of these withdrew from the itinerancy after a few years, “through weakness of body or family concerns,” to use the phrase of the old Minutes, but a few names, like those of McHenry and Burke, are among the brightest in the annals of Western Methodism.



CHAPTER XLVII

The Entrance into Kentucky

THE FATHER OF KENTUCKY METHODISM.—HAW AND OGDEN.—POY-
THRESS.—BROOKS AND MCHENRY.—FIRST KENTUCKY CONFERENCE.
—MIDDLE TENNESSEE PENETRATED.

IT is supposed that the Holston preachers were not alone at the Conference of 1788, for Methodist itinerants were already abroad among the vigorous settlements of Kentucky, and no perils of red men or wild beasts could have deterred such men as these from crossing the wilderness which lay between them and the assembly of their brethren.

It was in 1786 that the first Methodist itinerants formally reached Kentucky. The land of Daniel Boone was rapidly gaining settlers from Virginia and other States, and Baptist preachers were already at the front. The Presbyterians had formed a few churches, and were organizing the Presbytery of Transylvania.

The father of Kentucky Methodism was Francis Clark, a local preacher, who emigrated from Virginia with other Methodists and settled in Mercer County near Danville in 1783 or 1784. Here was formed a Methodist class, the first in what was then "the far West." A little later one Thomas Stevenson and his wife—the latter a convert of Robert

Strawbridge, in Maryland, in 1768—made their home near Washington, in Mason County, and with them the first itinerants found a cordial welcome.

At the Baltimore Conference in 1786 it was decided to send two preachers to form a circuit in Kentucky, and James Haw and Benjamin Ogden were read out for the appointment. Haw had preached four years in Virginia, but it was young Ogden's first year in an itinerant's saddle, though he had seen service in the Revolution, and was not the man to avoid exposure or privation. At Kenton's Station they found the Stevensons, and in their cabin Ogden preached and formed a society. Thence journeying on from stockade to stockade, at times alone, often under armed escort, they made the round of the white settlements, proclaiming the liberty with which their own souls had been set free and opening the way for those who should come after. They met with opposition from the lawless classes, who had fled to these wilds to escape the just reward of their crimes, and their work was sometimes embarrassed by preachers of other sects. But the first fruit of their labors was ninety members in society.

In 1787 James Haw was reappointed to "Kentucky," with Thomas Williamson and Wilson Lee; and a second circuit, called Cumberland, embracing the settlements on that great river in southern Kentucky and Middle Tennessee, was assigned to Ogden alone. The enthusiastic presiding elder and his able assistants so extended the work in Kentucky that the ensuing Conference of 1788 apportioned its four hundred and eighty members between two circuits, Lexington and Danville, and brought that experienced leader, Francis Poythress, from the East to superintend the work, at the same time that Peter Massie and Benjamin Snelling reinforced Williamson on Lexington Circuit.

Francis Poythress was now in his prime. He was of good origin, and had been reclaimed from habits of dissipation by Jarratt, the good Virginia rector. He joined the Methodist itinerancy before the war, and for a quarter of a century was one of its best exponents, the favorite choice of the discerning Asbury for work requiring judgment and administrative capacity. In 1783 he was sent to the Youghiogheny, a circuit in western Pennsylvania. Before the Christmas Conference Asbury had much talk with him about the plan of Church organization. In 1786 he entered upon a series of important charges, as presiding elder, in Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky, which he managed so well that in 1797 Asbury suggested him for his colleague in the general superintendency. Though a man of unusual physical strength, he succumbed at last to the strain upon his faculties, and his mind was darkened during his closing years. After 1802 his name was taken from the Conference roll, and in 1818 he died at the home of his sister, twelve miles south of Lexington, Ky., the State for which he gave his best energies.

Peter Massie, the junior on the Lexington Circuit this year, was one of those "weeping prophets" whose tears were more eloquent than words. He was the first Kentuckian convert who became a preacher. For some time after his conversion he resisted the call to preach, and lost his enjoyment of religion. At this time he escaped as by miracle from an Indian affray in which all his companions were slain. In his prayer for deliverance he had vowed himself to God's service, and he now made full consecration. His tearful appeals, pleasant address, and sweet songs gave him great success, but his physique was too frail for the demands upon it. After three years of faithful service he ceased at once to

work and live. As he sat at a settler's table near Nashville, Tenn., in December, 1791, he said, in reply to a remark upon his condition, "If I am not well enough to travel, I am happy enough to die." A few minutes later he expired—the first Kentucky preacher to pass to his reward.

In the year 1789 Poythress had seven preachers under him



OLD STATEHOUSE, FRANKFORT, KY.

in Kentucky, including the two on Cumberland Circuit, and more than a thousand members in society. Early in this year his colleague, Haw, wrote to Asbury in glowing language: "Good news from Zion; the work of God is going on rapidly in this new world; a glorious victory the Son of God has gained, and he is still going on conquering and to conquer. Heaven rejoices daily over sinners that repent.

Indeed the wilderness and solitary places are glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose."

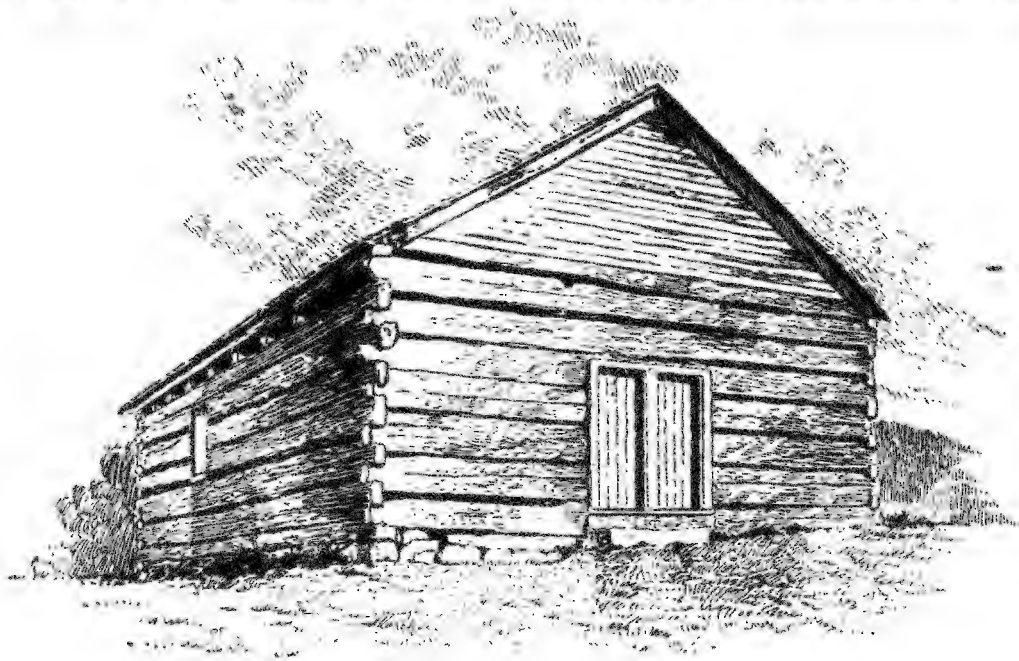
Stephen Brooks and Barnabas McHenry first figure in the Kentucky appointments of 1789. After four years Brooks located in Tennessee. McHenry's career was more conspicuous. He was a native of North Carolina, was converted at fifteen years of age, and was in the itinerant harness before he was twenty. Two years later he came to Kentucky, where he became identified with the history of Methodism. His personal presence was prepossessing, and his intellectual powers unusually vigorous and well disciplined. He had few equals as an expository preacher, unfolding his subject with perfect clearness and irresistible force. Bascom said of him, "Even a century in a single community produces few such men."

In 1790 Asbury came to Kentucky with an armed escort, and held Conference, the first in what was then "the far West," at Masterson's Station, near Lexington, in a log church. Lee, Williamson, and McHenry were ordained. The bishop preached, and souls were converted. Preachers were stationed on four circuits in Kentucky, Limestone and Madison being the new ones. The new preachers were Henry Birchett, of Virginia, who was distinguished for his work among the young; David Haggard and Joseph Lillard, who soon ceased to travel; and the unfortunate Samuel Tucker. Young Tucker was on his way down the Ohio to Limestone (Maysville) when his boat was attacked by Indians. The frontier preacher, inured to such dangers from his boyhood, joined in the defense, but received a mortal wound, though he continued to load and fire as long as he could see to sight his rifle. The boat eventually reached the settlement, and the remains of the preacher were laid in a nameless grave on the spot where he was to have begun his ministry

This year, 1790, was marked also by the establishment of a Methodist boarding school, Bethel Academy, in Jessamine County, a Cokesbury for the West. Its interests lay very near Poythress's heart, but the means at his command did not suffice for its support, and its precarious existence was soon terminated.

Salt River Circuit was added to the number in Kentucky in 1791, Madison being merged in Danville Circuit at the same time.

In April, 1792, the year of Kentucky's admission to the



DRAWN BY P. E. FLINTOFF.

SLICK FORD, KY., METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

A typical frontier Methodist meetinghouse in Kentucky.

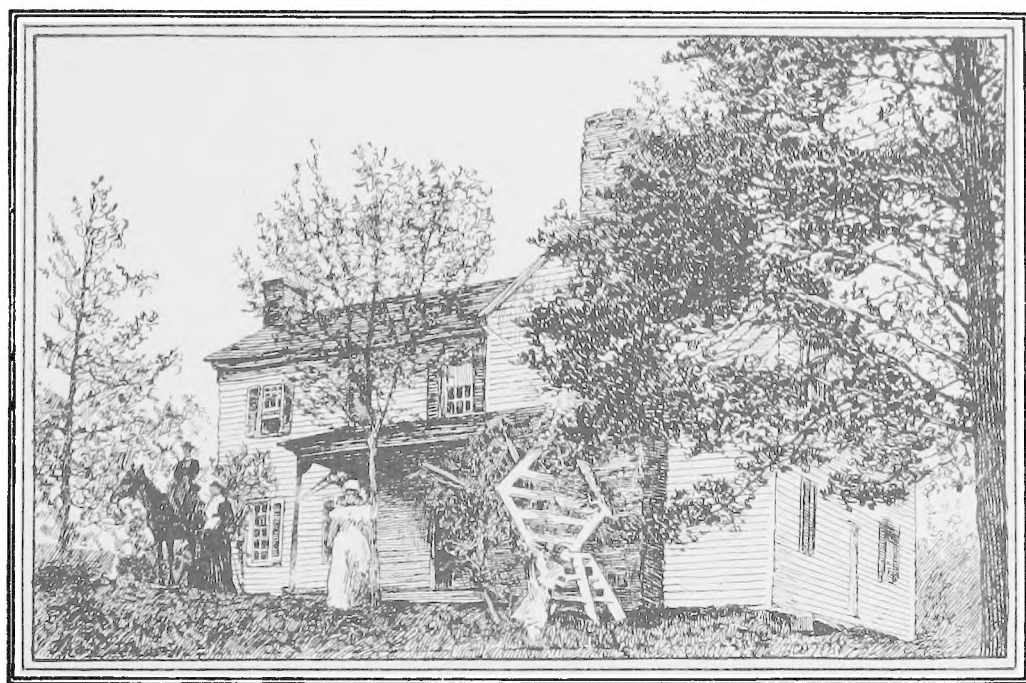
Union, Asbury came thither to hold his second Conference. “The spirit of matrimony is very prevalent here,” he remarked, upon learning how many of his young preachers wished to locate. “The land is good, the country new, and indeed all possible facilities to the comfortable maintenance of a family are offered to an industrious, prudent pair.” Reinforcements were necessary, and of the six new names on the list those of Benjamin Northcutt, John Ray, and John

Page deserve more than mention. Northcutt itinerated only a few years, but after his location few preachers were more useful than he in forming societies and bringing sinners to repentance. Ray preached for thirty years in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina. His commanding figure, strong visage, crowned with a bushy mane, bespoke a man of more than ordinary force of character. His small knowledge of books did not embarrass his utterance, and his discourse was marked with humor, sarcasm, and uncompromising firmness and boldness of speech. The latter quality sometimes brought him into personal danger, but his coolness and fearlessness never failed to bring him off with a whole skin, and woe to the rash man who measured wits with him.

John Page's name was on the Conference roll until 1859, except from 1804 to 1825, when he was local. In addition to the length of his service he is to be remembered as a leading factor in the revival scenes which, beginning in the Cumberland region about 1799, swept eastward to kindle the evangelistic ardor of all the Churches, and to repay them a thousandfold for the lives and treasure which had been lavished in sowing the West with the best of Gospel seed.

Middle Tennessee received its Methodist heralds from Kentucky. In 1787 Benjamin Ogden was sent to form the Cumberland Circuit, which comprised Nashville and the settlements on the north side of the Cumberland River. It lay partly in Kentucky, but mainly in Tennessee. The settlements were thin and scattered and open to Indian attacks. There was but one church—Presbyterian—in all that valley, and the sixty-three names which Ogden enrolled doubtless cost a vast expenditure of patience and toil. James Haw and Peter Massie, "the weeping prophet," entered into

their predecessor's labors, and in 1789 reported a membership of over four hundred. Among the early converts were many who became leading citizens, stanch Methodists, and whose sons have adorned the ministry of the Church. Haw soon married and left the itinerancy, afterward allying himself to



THE OLD MACDONALD HOUSE, NEAR BLACKSBURG, VA.

One of Bishop Asbury's favorite resting places on his way to Holston and Kentucky.

the O'Kelly faction, and at last dying in the Presbyterian communion.

Thomas Williamson and Joseph Hartly were the Cumberland preachers in 1789. In 1790 James Haw, Wilson Lee, and Peter Massie served the circuit, the last named falling at his post. Wilson Lee joined Conference in 1784, and for ten years traveled frontier circuits, returning to the seaboard in 1793. He is one more of those ardent spirits who poured out their physical resources unsparingly for the cause. Broken down before his prime, he was seized with hemorrhage of the lungs in April, 1804, while praying with a sick

person, and six months later he died, at the age of forty-three.

James O'Cull was another useful and greatly beloved worker on this circuit who too soon joined the ranks of the worn-out preachers. He had been brought up a Roman Catholic, and the freedom of the Methodist faith filled his soul with unspeakable joy

When the first Methodist General Conference met, in 1792, the Church numbered nearly six thousand members west of the mountains, who were under the pastoral care of thirty-five circuit preachers. The gateway of the West was now open, and the Methodist system had demonstrated its fitness for missionary work. The next great advance would naturally take the circuit riders north of the Ohio.

